

AN OBSTINATE FELLOW.

BY HENRI MONTCALM.

We talk a great deal about "natural affinity" and "true love" and "matches made in heaven;" and yet, are we at all aware how slight a thing it is that sometimes gives direction to our undying affections? Thus, for instance, Jack Willoughby would never in the world have fallen in love with Miss Alice Wheaton if he had not been forbidden to do so.

For there can be no doubt that Jack Willoughby was the most obstinate fellow that ever fell heir to a fortune. Jack was a farmer's boy, though he had not been brought up on a farm. A long while ago, when Jack's twin-brother Arthur was alive (Arthur was the good boy of the two, and died young), Farmer Willoughby had said of them one day, "Them two boys a'n't no more alike 'n a pea an' a partridge. You tell Arthur to wade into the river there till it's over his head, an' he'll do it; an' you tell John not to, an' he'll do it."

And thus it was that as John grew older he declined to stay about the old place just because his father insisted upon it. He ran away to sea, and was gone three years. Then he came back, took to books right in the face of the fact that they were the old gentleman's abomination, forced his father to send him to college (where he rapidly developed from plain John to handsome Jack), and then drew from his reluctant parent ample funds for a European tour. Mr Willoughby was well to do and not at all close with his money; but all these things were quite contrary to his old-fashioned ideas, and if Jack had not been an unusually obstinate fellow he could never have carried it with the old man with such a high hand.

But one day, when Jack was away up in Sweden somewhere, there came a letter, in the graceful female hand that the farmer's letters were always written in of late, saying that Alice was going away again, and begging Jack to come home and take care of his old father what little time he yet had to live. Jack did not know who "Alice" might be; but he was a dutiful son enough, after all, if he was left to himself; so home he went, and was very good to his father during this

last year of his life. Then Mr. Willoughby died; and a day or two after the will was read, and that is how Miss Alice Wheaton comes into the story.

The farmer's will was brief and to the point. It gave all the property, valued at something less than fifty thousand dollars, to Jack; but on one condition, — he was never to marry Miss Alice Wheaton. If he did it was all to go to a certain insane asylum. This condition, of course, seemed a very slight one to Jack, — that he should not marry a girl whom he had never seen in his life and did not have the slightest desire to see. Miss Wheaton, he had learned, was a distant relative who had remained with the old man a part of the time that Jack was away. There must be some strong reason why he should not marry her, however, else the old man would hardly have put it in the will that way and made it a condition of Jack's inheriting the property. But the young man cared little about that. He entered at once upon his inheritance and lived there a month. Then he shut the house up all at once and disappeared. People wondered for some time what had become of him. Nobody dreamed that he had gone off to look up Miss Alice Wheaton. That clause of the will had begun to trouble him the very first week after his father's death. What could the old man have meant by it really? Was n't he old enough to determine for himself whom he should marry and whom he should not? And what manner of girl was this, any way, whom his father considered unfit to become his son's wife? Jack went to the family lawyer, and made inquiries; but that functionary smiled grimly, and explained nothing. Then all at once, as has been said, he went off to hunt her up. He would not be dictated to in such matters.

He found Miss Wheaton in a delightful little village up among the Massachusetts hills. She turned out to be a very different person from her whom his fancy had painted. Instead of thirty, she was barely twenty; she was not a faded blonde, but a sparkling brunette; and although she lived in a coun-

try town, she was as cityfied and stylish as any of Jack's New-York acquaintances. Moreover, he had somehow gotten the idea that she was poor; and here she was, living in the most pretentious house in Summerville, and driving about every day in a handsome little phaeton with an iron-gray horse and a gold-mounted harness.

All these things our hero learned by industrious observation and inquiry during the first twenty-four hours of his stay at the Summerville tavern. He was really very fond of ladies' society and made up his mind to call at once. He watched his opportunity; and one morning, when he knew the young lady was at home, he sent up his card. Miss Wheaton came down at once, looking quite dazzling in a blue and white muslin. Her complexion was so clear, she could wear even blonde colors with impunity. She welcomed him cordially, spoke feelingly of his father's death, recalled the pleasant weeks she had spent at Willoughby Farm, and talked a long while on an abundance of ordinary subjects. She was faultlessly polite, and spared no effort to make his call an agreeable one. Yet, somehow or other, Jack felt that she was holding him at a distance; and when, as he arose to go, she asked him to call again, it was quite evident that it was a matter of indifference to her whether or no he accepted the invitation. He tried to analyze her manner as he went back to the tavern, and he concluded she must have heard about the will and was anxious to show him that there could never have been the slightest danger of such a marriage. "At any rate (he said to himself) she is a charming girl, the finest woman I ever set eyes on. And, by Jupiter! if I want to fall in love with her and marry her, I shall do it, and the property may go to—those lunatics over in Connecticut at once."

And fall in love with her was just what he did do very soon after that. Jack of course had no difficulty in effecting an entrance into the best Summerville society; and a few days later, he met Miss Wheaton at a church picnic. There, he tried to devote himself to her, but found it by no means an easy thing to do. She did not seem particular about having anybody's devotion. He was fortunate enough to be placed near her at table, but all the while she made him feel as though he were at least half a mile away. Not that he could really find fault with her manner, only "she had such an

irritating way of letting you know she did n't care a pin for you." If she had wished to captivate Jack Willoughby, she could have taken no surer way of accomplishing her purpose. He was just that obstinate, that opposition and indifference only stirred him to greater effort.

Not long after this, he was standing, one morning, on a bridge a little way out of town, leaning disconsolately over the railing, when Miss Wheaton drove by in her phaeton. She bowed without smiling, and Jack flushed angrily as he lifted his hat. "Deuce take her!" he grumbled. "Is she made of ice? I wish that big gray horse would run away with her." And then he turned back to the railing again and fell to thinking how, if any such accident should happen, he would rush forward, plant himself firmly in the road, seize the bit just at the right moment and rescue Miss Wheaton at the risk of his own life. And then he wondered if even that would thaw her.

Miss Wheaton had another amusement besides driving, as Jack had before this discovered. Almost every afternoon she went out on the river rowing, taking with her a small boy who lived on the river-bank and of whom she hired the boat. The very afternoon of the day he had fallen into this train of thought at the bridge, Mr Jack Willoughby, catching sight of Miss Wheaton pulling swiftly down the stream, suddenly came to the conclusion that it was incumbent on him, as a devoted and hopeless lover, to save the lady's life. He could not just now hit upon any other and less elaborate way of bringing her to terms.

For the present, therefore, he straightway transferred his attentions to the boy whom Miss Wheaton took rowing with her. He courted the urchin most assiduously, went out fishing with him every forenoon, and plied him so industriously with fine confectionery and fractional currency, that the little fellow soon became quite devoted to him and was finally made wholly his, body and soul, by the well-timed presentation of a one-keyed, boxwood flute. Then one morning our desperate lover all at once stopped rowing, and said, "Sammy, I'll give you a ten-dollar bill if you'll pull the plug out and throw it overboard, when you get out here this afternoon with Miss Wheaton." Sammy was rather startled by this diabolical proposal, and somewhat disposed to decline the contract; but he finally

consented upon Jack's repeated assurance that it was all for a joke and that he himself would be close by with another boat so as to take them off.

After dinner, therefore, when Miss Wheaton pulled out into the stream she noticed, following her at a short distance, a second boat in which sat a gentleman whom she had no difficulty in recognizing as Jack Willoughby. She laughed to herself slyly; for she was quite a young woman of the world and by no means blind to the fact that our hero was in love with her. She had heard about the will, and had on that account treated him coolly. But she really liked his appearance and manner very much, and being herself somewhat obstinate, she had been thinking whether, after all, if she liked him and he liked her, it was just the thing for her to keep him at a distance solely on account of the obnoxious clause in the will. And she determined to be a little more kind to him in the future.

Sammy was sitting in the bow of the boat, and could not be seen at all by the young lady, who had possession of the oars. All at once the boy gave a yell of well-counterfeited alarm. "O Miss Wheaton," he cried, "the plug's out the bottom of the boat. Look, how the water's pourin' in! O Lord! We're goin' ter sink, sure. Help! help!" and he waved his straw hat frantically at Jack. That gallant gentleman at once threw himself on his oars and pulled toward them.

Miss Wheaton looked around in some alarm when Sammy screamed. The little rascal had pulled the plug out fully a minute before betraying the fact, and there was already considerable water in the boat. But Miss Alice was a self-possessed young lady and by no means a green-hand. She saw at once that there was no danger, and she unshipped her oars leisurely. "Hush," she said sharply. "That is nothing. Where is the plug? Can't you put it in again?"

But no plug was to be found, so she directed him to hand her her sun-umbrella. And then what does she do but take this in both her little hands—click!—it is broken across her knee, and whipping a pen-knife from her dress pocket she proceeds with perfect unconcern to fashion a new plug from the umbrella handle. Then, leaning over, she fits it into the hole. There was only about three inches of water in the boat

even now, and the affair was far from tragic. "There! she said. "A'n't you ashamed of yourself, Sammy? Take that dipper, and bail out the water. And next time do you see that the plug is in before we start."

And now comes the ridiculous part of the affair. Jack's craft was a clumsy one and did not pull easily. Consequently all that has been related above had taken place before he arrived alongside. Just as he came upon the scene, as he dug his oars deep down into the water to overcome the enormous headway of the heavy boat, somehow or other the thwart gave way beneath him, and over he went on his back in the bottom of the boat, suddenly letting go his oars, which floated quickly away down stream.

He picked himself up and rubbed himself in confusion.

"Is anything the matter?" he called out excitedly to Miss Wheaton, still under the impression that her boat was about to sink.

This was entirely too much for the young lady's gravity, and she burst out laughing. Jack thought he had never heard so delicious a laugh in all his life, if it did seem to be at his own expense.

"Anything the matter!" she cried merrily. "Well, I should think there was! How are you to get ashore, sir, without your oars?"

"Oh, that is nothing. But I thought something had happened to you. Why did the boy yell so?"

"Why, we sprung a leak. But I've stopped it up and sent the crew to the pumps."

"Then there is nothing I can do for you?" and poor Jack looked really disappointed.

"Nothing, thank you. But there is something I can do for you. I can get your oars for you." And she whirled away, presently returning with them both.

So that was the way Mr. Jack Willoughby saved Miss Wheaton's life. He acknowledged to himself that the attempt was a good deal of a failure; but when he found that, somehow or other, the event had broken the ice between them, and she invited him to call at the house that very evening, he did not by any means wish it undone. When he took leave of her that night, to his surprise and rapture, she of her own accord proposed to take him riding the next morning in her phaeton. And very shortly after that it came about, one moonlight night as they

were riding along a country road together, that in spite of the dying wish of his father, Jack Willoughby proposed to Alice Wheaton and was accepted.

"I ought to tell you about my father's will, though," he said, after a few minutes of unalloyed happiness.

"Oh, I know all about that already, dear," she replied, fondly stroking his coat-sleeve with an air of proud possession. "I can't imagine why he should put such a condition in it. I always thought he liked me. At any rate, I know your love for me is sincere, else you would n't give up the property."

"I don't think there can be much doubt about my love for you," says Jack. "But I suppose we'll have to wait a while before we're married. I'll go home and read law with Barchester. I must go to work and earn something to support you with."

"Thank you, my dear, I can support myself, — and you too, for that matter. I have enough for both of us; and what's mine is yours."

"But I don't like the idea of living on my wife," says Jack sturdily. "I'll write to Barchester about the will anyhow. Maybe it can be broken. It's perfectly outrageous."

So Jack wrote to the lawyer, asking if the will could not be broken in some way, as he had made up his mind to marry Miss Wheaton even if he lost the property. The lawyer answered in the following note:—

"DEAR JACK, — The will cannot possibly be broken. But before he died, your father made a codicil which I was to keep secret so long as I saw fit. This codicil leaves you the property unconditionally. Permit me to congratulate you upon your approaching marriage with Miss Wheaton. It was the dearest wish of your father's heart that you should marry her.

"J. G. BARCHESTER."

And so Jack saw through it at last, how his father, wishing of all things that his son might marry Alice Wheaton, and knowing well that he never would do it if anybody tried to make him, took the opposite and just the right course, and told him not to. Jack was a little chagrined, all by himself, that he had been managed in this way without any will of his own; but he was not quite obstinate enough, after all, to relinquish, on that account, the "finest woman he had seen in all his life."

ARISTOCRACY HUMBLLED.

BY AMANDA M. HALE.

The carriage had rolled steadily through the pine woods for the last hour, and Nannie Maythorn had dozed for that length of time. But one cannot sleep always, and so Nannie awoke, breaking in upon Lu's reverie, and cutting short the thread of Jessie's novel.

"How much longer are we to go on in this tiresome way, I should like to know? Do, Jessie, urge Pharaoh to drive faster."

"Lu, can't you speak?" and Jessie's eyes went down upon her book again. It is so much easier to ask other people to do things than to do them yourself.

Lu put her head out of the window.

"Can't do it, Miss Lu, jis now, cause we's jis comin' to a bit o' swamp, an' old Dick 'll want to give his mind to it. Could n't think o' whippin' him now, no how."

Nannie's dissatisfied "Pish!" did not reach Lu's ears; for she sat still, her head forward, and leaning from the wide, open carriage, her eyes upon the tender, purple glooms of the deep forest, and her senses half entranced in the balmy languor that grew out of its stillness and sweet odors.

The carriage lumbered along through the swamp, heavily lurching to both sides, each strain more violent than the last, forcing little peevish shrieks from Nannie, and making Jessie look off her book again with the exclamation, —

"Do see what they are about, Lu!"

"Just as though I can help the wrenching of this carriage!" was upon Lu's lips; but as the words were about to leave them, the forward right wheel gave a heavy plunge, there was a loud cracking noise, and the motion suddenly ceased.

"Ho, dere! now, ho! what ails de horse? Broke fru de crust, have you? Why can't ye stan' still? Sam, I say, a'n't you got no presence of mind? Take dat ar horse by de bridle. Here we is, now, all safe and sound, thanks to my surgacity."

"You stupid fellow, you've frightened me almost to death! I'll write to papa to have you sold, the moment I get to The Cypress-es," said Nannie.

"Be quiet, Nannie. Don't you see that

Lu is hurt? Pharaoh, run quick! Isn't there a spring anywhere? O dear! what shall we do!" and Jessie, in her terror, wrung her hands in dismay, and gazed in utter helplessness at Lu's white face, as it sank back in a corner of the carriage. In the novels which she had read, gallant knights always came to the assistance of distressed damsels; and, looking about in a vague longing for help, she was not at all surprised to see a horseman gallop up to the side of the carriage, and dismount.

"Have you any wine or liquor of any kind with you?"

The calm, kind voice was re-assuring.

"Oh, yes! in the hamper. How fortunate!" and Jessie, who always felt that she should prove a heroine in any emergency, quickly drew out a flask and a small silver cup.

The gentleman poured out a little wine, and put the cup to Lu's lips. The subtle fluid started the springs of life. Lu's eyes opened, fixed wonderingly upon the stranger, then a little pink flush crept to her cheek, and she sat up and drew her shawl about her. But even as she did so, a crimson thread trickled down her cheek, and she put her hand to her temple.

Nannie screamed.

"O dear me! I cannot bear the sight of blood! Get me some water, somebody! I shall faint! Dolly! Fan!"

And, nobody minding her, Nannie lay back in the corner, and sobbed.

Lu was still pressing her handkerchief against the wound. Her hand was drawn away, and a linen bandage put around her temple.

"I will do it myself," Lu said.

"No, you cannot. Sit still!"

Who was this that assumed so much power? People were not accustomed to command Lu. It was n't in the Maythorn blood to submit to control. And yet Lu, to her own wonder, sat quite still, as she was told to do.

"That will soon check the flow of blood, I think. Drink a little more of the wine."

Lu hesitated.

"Drink!"

She did drink, and the gentleman stepped to the ground.

"And now we will see what is to be done. Is the breakage very serious, my good fellow?"

"Deed, mas'r, spect de old ting's gone to smash for good and all."

"Then you 'll have to unharness your horses, and ride one of them to The Cypresses."

"Ride! De O'le Harry hisself could n't ride one o' dem horses. Dem horses, sar, has a way ob dere own, an' I has to gib in to it."

"Ah! but perhaps it is n't so bad as you think."

The gentleman went to the side, and in a minute reported that the break was a mere trifle, and he repaired it forthwith, with a bit of a whip-lash and a fragment of rope. Did it "wid his own hands," as Pharaoh afterward remarked; "and he a gemmen wid fingers white as Miss Nannie's," at which Nannie fainted, Jessie said "How romantic!" and Lu sewed steadfastly and did not vouchsafe a word.

"Now you can go on. Ladies, I am happy to say that you can proceed safely. You are expected at The Cypresses, I think."

Lu bowed rather haughtily.

"Oh, yes!" Jessie replied very cordially. "We sent Dolly and Fan—our maids—in advance of us. Are you staying at The Cypresses? We are going there for Nannie's health. Is it a pleasant place? Are there nice people there?"

Jessie's questions were answered *a seriatim* as the carriage jolted slowly along, the stranger riding by its side, Lu looking gloomily out at the darkening pine wood, and Nannie sulking in the corner.

There was a large amount of sulkiness in the Maythorn blood, and that element had all drained off into Nannie's and Lu's veins, and left Jessie sweet-tempered and placable.

A reservation must be made in regard to Lu. Her forgiveness must first be asked. Was it for her to go forward, and say, "I forgive you: let us be friends"? Clearly not; and that was why it vexed her that Ferdinand Alcock should ride by her side so unconcernedly, chatting with her innocent, foolish sister, Jessie. What right—

"Why, Lu! this is Mr. Ferdinand Alcock, whom papa liked so much, you know," cried

Jessie. "Oh, I forgot that you met him last winter. How strange that you should not recognize each other."

Thus challenged, Lu could only give her hand to Mr. Alcock, and say she was happy to see him.

"Are you quite comfortable now?" he asked.

"Quite, thank you. Nannie, are you better?"

"It's no matter whether I am or not," replied Nannie fretfully. "You can go on looking out at the window, though what you see there I can't imagine; nothing but ugly skeletons of trees. Are there any robbers in these woods, Mr. Alcock?"

And the girl, as she asked the question, sat up, and, throwing back the hood of her traveling cloak, showed him her face for the first time. It was pale and thin and childish, with fair, floss-like hair straggling in curling threads over the blue-veined temples,—the eyes gray and soft.

"Not that I know of, Miss Nannie."

"Because I shall be so frightened if there are. How far are we now from The Cypresses?"

"Only two miles. Are you very tired?"

The girl's gray eyes looked up at him wonderingly. Jessie was indifferently gentle, Lu dutifully kind, but this voice was full of sympathy. If Lu or Jessie had asked the question, she would have moaned out a melancholy reply; but, as it was, she said gently,—

"I'm a little timid, thank you."

Lu changed her seat and told Nannie to lean upon her, and so they came out of the wood at last and up to the veranda of the large wooden hotel, whose many-lighted windows beamed a hospitable welcome. Jessie looked about for their cavalier, but he had disappeared, and in his stead the landlord, burly and good-natured, but not half so gentlemanly or romantic.

"And this is the little sick one?" Mr. Hayden took hold of the huge bundle of cloaks.

"Don't!" cried the animated centre of the mass. "Don't! you hurt me!"

"I 'll take you out, Miss Nannie," and Mr. Alcock put one arm around the quaking bundle.

Nannie was quiet at once.

"Thank you, Mr. Alcock."

Dolly and Fan stood smiling with great assiduity upon the landing, and ran hither

and thither the moment Nannie set her foot in her room.

Lu quietly threw off her own wrapping, and disburdened Nannie. Jessie dropped on the rug before the open fire.

"What a delightful chance that we should meet Mr. Alcock! How entertaining he is! I declare! it is like a chapter out of a book."

"And so kind," said Nannie. "Dear me! I'm almost famished. Lu, do order tea."

"If you please, Miss Nannie," and Dolly preceded a tall waiter into the room, leaving the tea-tray. Fan followed, with other appurtenances.

"How delightful!" exclaimed Nannie, sipping her tea.

"Mr. Alcock, he see to it all, Miss Nannie," said Dolly. "He gabe orders dat de tea should be pertic'lerly nice for de young ladies."

"Did he?"

Nannie's childish eyes sparkled.

Lu stood by, cutting bread and serving cold meat.

"Are n't you going to eat anything yourself?" asked Jessie, in surprise, as Lu turned away.

"No! I remembered the hamper, you know."

And she went toward the door.

"Lu!" called out Nannie.

She turned back.

"Well?"

"Did Mr. Alcock fall in love with you last winter at Washington?"

Lu's face flushed angrily.

"Don't be absurd, Nan!"

And she went out.

They all met in the public parlor the next morning. Nannie would go down. She had declared before coming to The Cypresses that she would never show herself to crowds of people, — never. She should shut herself in her own room, and Lu and Jessie might amuse themselves as they liked: they would not miss her, she dared say. Yet here she was, established in a snug corner, Mr. Alcock behind her chair, and regarding her with a kind, half-smiling face, Lu at her side, and half a dozen gay girls and young men chatting near her. Nannie was gentle and good and merry this morning; she was so slight and frail-looking, the little flush of rose in her white cheeks was so very faint, that it she had been otherwise it might have been forgiven, but now she attracted every one.

Presently the breakfast-bell rang:

"You don't go to breakfast, I suppose," said Mr. Alcock to Nannie.

The gray eyes sought his face in wonder.

"Not go to breakfast?" she echoed.

"Of course not. A'n't you one of those ethereal creatures who live upon odors and sound?"

"Do I look like one?" laughed Nannie.

"A little. But you *will* go? Allow me to conduct you, then."

Lu was already at her service; but Nannie turned away from her with an indifferent "No matter, Lu," and took Mr. Alcock's arm.

Lu shrank back, in sudden pain. What right had Ferdinand Alcock to come between her and Nannie? What was there about this man that drew everything to him?

She was walking soberly through the hall when an eager whisper at her ear startled her.

"Lu! Miss Maythorn!"

She turned.

"Oh! Win, is it you?" Then she bit her lips in vexation.

The handsome, honest face beside her flashed up in a glow of pleasure.

"Thank you, Lu. There is no need of my saying how glad I am to find you here."

She put her hand on his arm.

"When did you come?" she asked.

"Last night, an hour or two after you," he replied.

"Who is of your party?"

"Ned Iverson, Charlie Bright, *Captain* Charlie, the Douagers, and" —

He looked at her doubtfully.

"Miss Iverson?" Lu said quietly.

"Yes, Lu: you won't mind her," kindly.

"Mind her?"

Lu drew herself up.

"Don't be angry, Lu. I shall wish her at the bottom of the Red Sea if she vexes you."

They reached the table. Nannie looked around suddenly.

"Why, Lu!"

Lu directed her look down the table. There was Jessie between Ned Iverson and Charlie Bright, Miss Iverson opposite to her, and near by the Douagers, looking on serenely.

"The Maythorns are very aristocratic," thought Mrs. Bright, "and what my family wants is blood."

Mrs. Iverson smoothed the folds of her wrapper, and said to herself complacently,—

"The girl will find my Ned irresistible, and they say Mr. Maythorn will portion his daughters like princesses."

"That hateful Miss Iverson!" exclaimed Nannie.

"Hush, Nan!" whispered Lu warningly. "Not a word of that to Mr. Alcock."

Lu, eating her breakfast, and listening to Winfield de Lanter, stole glances at Miss Iverson.

"You 'll forgive my blunder, Lu—dear?" The last word was a whisper. "I could n't help knowing you had reason to dislike her, though you know I was selfish enough to wish she had succeeded. You can't wonder at that, Lu?"

"No!"

Lu was watching Ferdinand Alcock.

"But I'll do Alcock the justice to say that he never faltered. He knew you too well, Lu, and Miss Iverson lost her game,—though I wish she 'd won it; I do indeed, Lu."

"Don't say so, Win. Let me be glad to see you."

But Lu did not notice how the handsome face clouded at these words. She had just seen Miss Iverson bow with graceful *empressment* to Alcock, and caught his merely polite acknowledgment. Yes: it was indisputable that Winfield de Lanter was right. Ferdinand Alcock had never cared for Miss Iverson. She had thrown away his love in a freak of blind jealousy. "Did you say the same words to Laura Iverson yesterday? or will you say them tomorrow?" she had asked him in bitter sarcasm, and he had told her sternly that she had indeed convicted him of folly in loving her. Now she wondered how she could have imagined he could care for Laura Iverson. No wonder his pride and honor had been affronted at the suggestion. And now—she glanced at him.

He was listening to Nannie's playful prattle. What charm had he to beguile the sensitive child into good humor? Both of them were unmindful of her. Lu put down a bitter feeling. Nobody loved her—nobody cared for her suffering—except, indeed, poor dear Win, good fellow. Why could n't she have loved him? Perhaps, if she had not known him from childhood, she might,—perhaps, even now. She turned to say something kind to him, and the

tears came to her eyes to see the grave face break up into smiles at her first word.

"What shall we do with ourselves this morning?" was the question which arose after breakfast.

The whole company resolved itself into a committee of ways and means to provide for the day's amusement.

Jessie would drive: Ned Iverson had invited her, and Lu also. Winfield de Lanter put his carriage at her service, and she dared not decline for fear Mr. Alcock would think she waited for a similar courtesy from him.

And Nannie? She could not think of driving: it always hurt her. Here Charlie Bright ventured to say, with a glance of shy admiration at the pretty face, that he had "the easiest carriage in the world. If Miss Nannie would only like"—But Miss Nannie did n't like it all, and declared that she should stay at home, and, if Jessie or Lu persisted in staying with her, she would go to sleep, and not say a word till dinner-time. In half an hour they were all gone, and Nannie was sitting on the veranda alone, her knitting lying idly on her lap, and trying to make herself believe she had been very ill-used. It was hard that she should have to stay cooped up here, while all the rest were taking their pleasure. She did n't see why she could n't have been strong and well like other people. And now her head ached, and there was nobody to talk to. And here Nannie began to cry. But that only made her head ache worse; and after five minutes, she wiped her eyes, and took up her knitting.

"Is the shower over now? and will the sunshine last?" said a voice over her shoulder.

Nannie started. There was Ferdinand Alcock, looking down at her, with mischief in his eyes. Nannie was half inclined to be angry. Of all things, she disliked being laughed at. But she decided to be amiable.

"Because, if it does not, I shall go away: I don't like April weather."

"Pray don't go!" Nannie exclaimed eagerly. "I'll be good."

"Will you?" He smiled. "Hist! look there, Miss Nannie."

A gorgeous moth was swinging in the blossom of an orange-tree that grew by the veranda. Mr. Alcock made a quick spring, and caught it.

"Splendid fellow, is n't he?"

And he held the creature — all lustrous in purple and gold, and soft with silken down — toward Nannie.

"Now, do you know why he reminds me of you?"

Nannie looked thoughtful for a moment.

"It is because he is good for nothing but to be looked at?" she said naively.

Mr. Alcock laughed.

"Pretty; yet even butterflies have a work to do in the world. There! he is gone."

"I wish I could fly away like that," said Nannie, following the brilliant speck with her eyes.

Ferdinand Alcock sat down by her.

"I can think of a much better way. If you had a little pony, small and swift and strong and gentle, — one who would understand you, and do as you liked, — and an easy, convenient saddle" —

"Oh, that would be delightful!" interrupted Nannie.

He went on, watching the soft color rise in her cheek.

"I have just such an one; and if I were to order it, and my own Arab, saddled and bridled" —

"Oh, would you!" Nannie's gray eyes were bright with pleasure.

"Run, then, and get ready."

She was away like a fairy, and down again on the veranda very quickly. He put her gently in the saddle, soothed her first timidity, and then they followed the path leading to the pine wood. They threaded long, deep aisles, soft with the fallen needles, dark with the gloom of the crowding trees, and odorous with their sweet resin. At last they came out upon the beach, and rode up and down the sands, and dared the snowy breakers. Then he lifted her out of the saddle, and placed her in a shady place, under a gaunt pine, which had strayed seaward. They talked there a long time, and Nannie was not even vexed when he told her that it was wrong to be sick, and that really she must not indulge herself in it.

When Nannie set her foot upon the piazza, Mr. Alcock said, —

"Now you have just time for a nap before dinner. Mind you don't come down looking pale."

Coming back along the hall, after he had been with her to the foot of the landing, he met the driving party, just come up. They were late, and hurried to their rooms.

"Your scarf, Miss Maythorn. Why are you in such haste?"

She came back a step.

"I must go to Nannie," she said, taking the scarf, and not daring to look into Ferdinand Alcock's face.

"Nannie is well; I have just taken her to ride, and now she has gone to lie down."

"Thank you. You are very kind."

"You are very unkind, Miss Maythorn."

"Am I?"

"You are as cold as though you had been born at the poles."

"Fire will melt ice," she said, flashing her luminous eyes upon him.

"Will it?" He laughed shortly. "But I am not fire; if I were, ice would extinguish me. Yet I would like to be friendly with you, Lu."

She put out her hand.

"And I am not fond of quarreling," said Lu.

And then she went to her own room, and sat down, pressing her hands to her hot temples. She believed that the love that she had once thrown away would never be offered to her again.

To Nannie the weeks were strings of pearls, that slipped from her grasp, one by one, while she grieved to let them go. To Lu, each was a dead weight, which she dragged wearily after her. To Jessie, they were scenes out of a romance; every day was like a tournament, where Ned Iverson was the victorious knight, and laid the crown of love and beauty at her feet.

But the summer heats were coming on, and The Cypresses would soon be deserted.

To many, going home would not be quite the same that a return from a winter trip had formerly been. Late military movements in the States had changed their domestic condition.

One evening the mail came in, and its favors were showered around the drawing-room. An angry exclamation from Miss Iverson startled everybody.

"Mamma! Ned! see here! Papa says he cannot send Adolphe after us, as usual, because the rascal has run away and joined the Yankees. And so have Sue and Lizzie and Mollie — And, mamma, do you hear this? 'Half the plantation-hands have absconded!'"

"The devil they have!" ejaculated Ned Iverson, growing pale.

"O mamma! what shall I ever do without Lizzie? Nobody can ever do my laces like her."

"Don't be a fool, Laura," exclaimed Ned, as he strode moodily out of the room.

To those who knew, as Mr. Alcock did, that Mr. Iverson's property was mostly in negroes, Ned's emotion did not appear singular.

In the general interest about the Iversons, no one, except Mr. Alcock, saw Lu crush her letter in her hands, and bite her lip to keep from shrieking. He made his way to her.

"You are faint, Lu. Let me take you out."

She looked up thankfully, and rose.

They went out upon the veranda.

"What is it, Lu?"

She burst into tears. Once she would have told him her sorrow, and once no one could have comforted her like him. But this was past.

"I think I know, Lu."

She looked up, surprised.

"Your letter tells of loss and ruin, does it not?"

"How could you know?" she stammered.

"I have foreseen it a long time, — as long as since last winter."

Last winter, then, he knew she was poor, and yet he had asked her to marry him.

"The negroes have run away, the government has appropriated the crops, and the creditors have attached the personal property. Is that it, Lu?"

"Papa does not write any particulars," she answered faintly. "He only says he is ruined."

Lu's lip quivered. Ruined! What did that mean to the proud Maythorns? Lu sank down upon a seat. Ferdinand walked up and down before her, looking at her with wistful sympathy. Something of the old glamour was about her still. She was Lu Maythorn to him again. For that moment she was just as he had loved her first. Did he not love her still?

At length he came near her chair, and said, —

"Lu?"

The pale, beautiful face was lifted.

"Lu, I am not rich, yet I was once bold enough to ask you to be mine: I ask it again now."

The last words were spoken softly, and with infinite tenderness. The solid earth

seemed swept from beneath her feet. Her whole being tossed about in the surging tempest of love that overwhelmed her. Oh, to yield to it! to taste its sweetness! to tell him that she loved him! to beg him to forgive the past! to win back, by constant tenderness, the heart which her folly had only half alienated. All the passionate impulses of her heart swayed her this way. But Nan? She shivered — rose.

"Let me go now, Ferdinand. I cannot think. I am not myself."

His face darkened. He caught her hand to detain her.

"Don't be angry, Ferdinand! I will be honest, — I promise you before God that I will be," she said fervently, a rain of tears dimming her eyes, "but now I do not belong to myself. There are others whom I must think of."

He released her, and she ran along the hall, up-stairs, and on toward her room.

"I beg pardon!" She had not seen any one coming, in the half-light. "Oh! it is Miss Maythorn. Dear Miss Maythorn! you are just the person I have been wanting to see."

"What can I do for you, Captain Bright?" said Lu, shrinking into the shade, and controlling her impatience.

"Everything. Nobody can do more. If you could speak a good word for me, you would make me your humble servant forever."

"I don't understand you."

"Why, dear Miss Lu, I can't say fine things like Ned Iverson, and I don't know very well about girls, — you can't seem to make 'em like you by being jolly, as you can fellows, and I've never told her anything about it, though I've been on the point of doing so a thousand times, but I was afraid it would frighten her. If you would tell her, Miss Lu, how much I love her, and that I think she is the loveliest girl in the world, and try to make her think that she can some time love me, — not now, you know, but in the course of years, — you'd make me infinitely happy."

And Captain Charlie ceased pulling the tassels on his gold-laced cap to pieces, and looked honestly up into Lu's face.

"I'll do anything I can for you, but I don't understand whom I'm to tell this to," said Lu, bewildered.

"Why, your sister Nannie, of course," said the captain, surprised.

And he blushed girlishly.

"O Captain Charlie!" exclaimed Lu. "I am sorry for you!"

"Now don't say that," and Charlie's bright boyish face took on a look so hopeless that Lu was smitten with pity.

"I'm in no hurry, — I can wait years and years, you know, — and I know I'm not good enough for her" —

Here Charlie broke down, choked with emotion.

"You are good enough for anybody, Charlie; but there are one or two things you ought to know."

And then Lu told him that Nannie was a delicate, petted child, and that now her father was poor, and could give his daughters no dowry.

Captain Charlie listened, not more than half understanding, — his love loomed so large between him and the rest of the world, — and Lu went away promising to do all she could for him.

Jessie and Nannie had not yet come up, and Lu had plenty of time for solitary thinking.

Her cheeks burnt at the thought that Ferdinand Alcock might believe she looked upon marriage with him as a resource. But no! she would not be influenced by that feeling. He knew her better; knew her to have many faults, but not that one. That he would not have renewed his offer, if this loss had not come upon them, she was sure. Was it not partly in compassion? Once her pride would have resented this, but her pride was strangely gone. And could she not win him back; be to him what she was when the first wild dream of love overmastered him, and brought him to her feet? She cherished this sweet assurance. She was glad he was poor. She had always hated this idle, purposeless life. But what was the use of all this if —

"O Nannie!"

Nannie was close by, and flung herself at Lu's feet, and crossed her arms upon her lap.

"O Lu! Mr. Alcock says he leaves when we do, and he will go our way — quite home with us — if you do not forbid him, and I told him I would coax you to, and you will let him go, there's a dear Lu?" and Nannie looked up eagerly. "Why, Lu, what's the matter? are you ill?"

"No!"

"Oh, I know. You've had a letter. Papa

is ill. I want to go home. O my poor papa!"

"Papa is well, but he is ruined."

Then Lu blamed herself. She had meant to break it gently.

"Is what?" asked Jessie.

"Ruined. Papa has lost his property, and now we are poor."

"Poor!"

"Poor!"

"Both the girls repeated the word, but they seemed far more quiet than she had anticipated.

"Then shall I have to give up Dolly?" asked Nan.

"People sell their servants when they become poor, don't they?"

"Of course you won't have to give up Dolly," said Jessie. "Papa won't do anything so absurd. I dare say we shall do very well."

Lu looked at her in astonishment. She was ignorant that the young lady had her own private sources of consolation.

When Jessie was gone to bed, Lu said, —

"I want to tell you something, Nannie."

"Well! I hope it is n't anything more about being poor."

"No, dear. It is something that will make you rich if you like."

"What do you mean?" Lu gave Captain Charlie's message. Nannie covered her face in Lu's dress, and cried softly.

"He is a very nice, good young man, dear."

Nannie gave an impatient shrug.

"I don't care."

"And is affectionate. If you love him, Nannie" —

"But I don't. O Lu, I don't love him!" and Nannie sobbed hysterically. "Let me go to bed! And don't put your hands upon my forehead, — they're so cold."

"No wonder," murmured Lu, with ashy lips, and they both went to bed. Nannie soon cried herself to sleep, but the gray dawn found Lu broad awake.

"Nannie!" Lu started up in affright.

Nothing but inarticulate sounds came from Nannie's couch.

"Jessie, Jessie, come quickly!" and Lu sprang to the bell. It was one of those terrible attacks from which poor Nannie suffered, but they had been so long absent that now they brought a double terror.

The house was quickly roused, and the nearest physician brought.

At noon the next day Nannie was lying on the lounge playfully declaring that she was able to start for home the next day, and that she must and would go. It was better to indulge than thwart her, the doctor said, and they made their preparations to start the next day.

"How is Nannie tonight?" asked Ferdinand Alcock, when Lu came down just before eleven.

"Better, but weak. The doctor says every attack loosens her slight hold upon life."

"Poor child! are you going, Lu?" She turned: she was already upon the second step.

"Have you nothing to say to me, Lu?"

"Nothing!"

"Lu! you love me?" Her eyes did not falter: he thought he could see far down their transparent depths to her inmost soul.

"Yes, I love you, Ferdinand; but I am suffering now the punishment of my folly. Don't kiss me. I can't bear your tenderness: I have no right to it." And Lu fled.

"You'll go with us, won't you, Mr. Alcock?" pleaded Nannie. "I coaxed Lu, and she said she would n't object."

Ferdinand looked at Lu.

"Yes, I will go." He went.

"You are going, Lu, and not a kind word for me."

"Yes, I am going; but, dear Win, my heart is full of kindness for you."

"I wish you hated me, then," and the handsome, honest face grew a shade bitter. "I have not told you, Lu, but I am going into the army. Perhaps some Yankee bullet will find the way to my life. I hope it may. At any rate, I shall love you as long as I live. Good-by, Lu."

She held out her hand. He held it a moment, then drew her to him in one strong, passionate embrace, and Lu was alone.

The doors were wide open at the Rose-lands, but still the rooms were oppressively warm.

Books were about, a few deeply tinted flowers, a basket of fruit upon a table, but the room was otherwise bare of adornment. Nannie lay on the lounge. She had never rallied from the attack which she had while at The Cypresses. She had gone steadily downward toward the shores of the dark river, and now its waves broke at her feet.

"Dear Lu," said Nannie.

"What is it, darling?"

"You had some news last night which pained you. What was it?"

Lu's face became sad.

"Poor Winfield de Lanter is dead, Nannie, — fell in front of battle."

"O Lu! to give up his life in that bad cause."

"Nannie!"

"It is indeed, Lu. I know you think it is' though it seems like treason to say so, and Ferdinand does too. God has shown it all to me since I have lain here."

There was a little silence, and then Lu said, —

"That was not all, Nannie; Mrs. Bright writes me that Captain Charlie was killed fighting in the Federal army," and Lu's tears fell fast.

"Poor Charlie!" said Nannie pityingly.

"Lu," she continued after a moment, "do you know I often think how blindly we have all been playing at cross-purposes, — Win and Charlie and Ferdinand as well as you and I. But it does not matter to me now. Once" —

"Don't, Nannie!"

"Yes, Lu. Once I foolishly fancied that Ferdinand might love me, he was so kind to me, and I gave him all my silly, worthless little heart: but now I see that I should never have been fit for him." Nannie was restless a moment. "Is that Ferdinand on the veranda? Ask him to come here." He came. "You love Lu, Mr. Alcock?"

He put an arm around Lu, and gave a hand to Nannie.

"And you, also, Nannie."

She smiled.

"Yes, I know, but not — so. It is tomorrow week that Jessie and Ned are to be married, is it not?"

"Yes."

"And that must be your wedding-day. Don't refuse, Lu. I wish it, — indeed I do."

Nannie had her way. But the church which was opened for the bridal, ere long swung back its doors before a funeral cortege, and —

"The little birds sang east,
And the little birds sang west;
And I said, in under-breath,
'All our life is mixed with death,
And who knoweth which is best?'"

ARTHUR DELANCY.

BY MISS CAROLINE C. ORNE.

CHAPTER I.

"You have fed upon my signiories,
Disparked my parks, and felled my forest
woods;
From my own windows torn my household
coat;
Razed out my impress, leaving me no signs,
Save men's opinions and my living blood,
To show the world I am a gentleman."

—*King Richard II.*

It was near the close of one of those fresh, lovely days of spring, whose quickening breath infuses new life into the expanding bud and opening flower. After standing in a thoughtful attitude a few minutes, a young man began slowly ascending an eminence on which was situated a massive watch-tower.

Thence the eye looked down on a noble pile of buildings erected at different periods and in different styles of architecture, yet all displaying a grandeur and magnificence which denoted the immense resources of feudal power. Most of the buildings were in good preservation, while those built at more remote periods exhibited glimpses of decay through the ivy which crept luxuriantly over the walls.

The young pedestrian, when he had gained the summit, planted himself in the shadow of the tower. His clothing was not of a kind to designate his rank; but the haughty, even stern, expression which now and then broke through the melancholy that shaded his countenance indicated a lofty, dignified spirit, such as is not apt to animate one accustomed to obey the arbitrary commands of a master, or quail beneath his frown. Bitter was the throng of reflections busy in his bosom as with folded arms he stood gazing on the lofty pile which reposed in gloomy grandeur at his feet.

Two years before, he had left his native land to fight under the banner of Cœur de Lion on the burning plains of Syria. When he returned, he found that his father had been dead several months; and that his paternal domains had been sequestered by order of Prince John, and conferred on Sir

Edred Dymoke, with whom his father had been at feud several years previous to his decease.

Many minutes had not elapsed before a man emerged from the inner court of the castle, with a falcon on his wrist. The gloom darkened over the young soldier's brow; and, snatching an arrow from its quiver, he drew it to its head. But the next moment, while a flush of shame crossed his cheek at the baseness of the deed which a momentary impulse urged him to perform, he suffered the bow to relax, and the arrow fell to the ground.

Just at this moment, the falcon, being unrestrained by jesses, darted from the wrist of Sir Edred, and winged its way to the neighboring valley, where a tame dove, bold in fancied security, scarcely attempted to elude its enemy.

A young girl unsuccessfully endeavored to lure back her truant bird, which had just flown from her hand.

"Sir Edred! Sir Edred!" she cried, — for, having stepped forward to watch what to him was sport, he became visible to the distressed girl, — "cruel Sir Edred! do call your falcon away."

"Why should I?" he said coldly. "I can procure you another dove, and you will have the pleasure of taming it."

"But it will not be that dove," said the maiden, a tear glistening in her eye.

A cry of terror succeeded her entreaties: the falcon had seized the dove.

Nearly at the same instant, it fell, with its prey, almost at her feet. An arrow had pierced its heart. The proud, bright eye was closed; and the relaxed talons suffered the uninjured but trembling dove to escape, which immediately sought shelter in the bosom of its mistress.

"What cowardly knave has done this?" exclaimed Sir Edred, furiously rushing toward the spot whence he descried the flight of the arrow.

"I did it, though neither knave nor coward," said the young soldier, stepping forth from the shadow of the tower.

There was something in the keen glance

of his clear, black eye, which, in spite of himself, caused Sir Edred to cower before him. He soon recovered his self-possession.

"Were your birth and good-breeding such as would not disgrace one of gentle blood to try weapons with you," said he, "you should be branded with both these names, for your meddling insolence, or by your own sword prove yourself worthy not to wear them. As it is, I shall compel you to cope with one of my vassals, with such weapons as will befit you and him."

"My name is Arthur Delancy," said the young soldier; "and I am descended, as you yourself know, from a house which is at least as ancient and honorable as that which Sir Edred Dymoke descended from. You therefore need not fear to soil your escutcheon by endeavoring to make good with your own hand the degrading epithets you have cast upon me; and I hereby hurl them back to you, with my defiance."

And, as he concluded, he threw his glove at Sir Edred's feet.

The change wrought in Delancy's personal appearance by so long a sojourn in a warmer clime than his native land, together with a costume more befitting the low state of his finances than his noble birth, made it no matter of marvel that Sir Edred did not recognize him; but, at hearing the name of Arthur Delancy, his dark features, which seldom gave expression to what was passing in his mind, writhed as if he were under the influence of torture. As he passed his hand over his face to conceal his agitation, he said, in a tone entirely divested of its former pride and haughtiness, —

"Tomorrow evening, then, if it please you, we will meet in the shadow of this tower."

"I am content," replied Delancy, "to meet you then and here, and will not fail."

CHAPTER II.

The young girl, whose name was Adela, little dreamed that it was the injured Delancy who had saved her pet dove. After having caressed and soothed it, she stooped down, and drew the arrow from the bleeding breast of the falcon.

"I will preserve this arrow," she said to herself, "for it saved the life of the only thing which I am certain loves me. But

what is this?" as the motto, *Dieu et mon droit*, inscribed on the shaft, caught her eye. "It is the motto once chosen by Cœur de Lion. A friend of his must have sped it. Perhaps" —

She did not give utterance to the name of Arthur Delancy as it flashed upon her mind; but a deep blush suffused her cheek as she carefully concealed the arrow among the folds of her dress.

The gloom of twilight, though silvered by the light of a full moon, began to veil objects in a shadowy indistinctness before she was aware; and, without farther delay, she hastened toward an ancient castle a quarter of a mile distant, where, since the decease of her father, she had lived with her step-mother, that lady being desirous of personally superintending the improvements she wished to make on an estate which had recently fallen to her as the lineal heir.

As Adela wished to avoid meeting any person, she approached the castle at a point remote from the hall where the household were then assembled at supper; but she drew precipitately back, when, as she was about to enter beneath the rude Saxon arch which formed the portal, she perceived a person, whom her fears magnified into a size almost gigantic, leaning against one of the sides.

Her alarm subsided, when, on stepping forward from the shadow of the arch, she saw, by his black mantle wrought with the keys of St. Peter, his battle and scip, and the scallop-shell in his cap, together with the withered palm-branch, that he was a palmer from the Holy Land. His figure and mien were stately and majestic; but his features were concealed by his cowl.

"Give me leave, fair lady, to rest on yonder bench," he said; "for I have traveled far today, and the way has been rough and toilsome."

"Surely, holy Palmer," said Adela, "you would confer instead of receive a favor by so doing. But will you not proceed to the hall, where supper is being served, and partake of some refreshment?"

"No," replied the palmer: "my bottle, replenished a short time since from the cool spring, and a morsel of bread from my scip, will afford sufficient wherewith to satisfy the cravings of hunger."

"Good-night, then, holy Palmer; and I will go and order for you a more comfortable place of repose."

"Stay one moment. Is it not Norbury Castle which I see yonder?"

"It is."

"And the earl — is he still alive?"

"He is not. He has been dead several months."

"His vassals then, if appearances were true when I passed there half an hour since, carry things with a high hand. I fear, that, when the son returns from the crusade, he will not find his revenues improved."

"The possessions of the late earl have passed into other hands. Sir Edred Dymoke is the proprietor now."

A passionate exclamation escaped the lips of the palmer, at this announcement, apparently before he was aware, and which Adela thought was not in exact accordance with the meekness and sanctity appropriate to his character. He immediately checked himself, and said, —

"I will detain you no longer, fair lady. Good-night, and may God's benison be yours."

Adela lingered one minute. She wished to inquire concerning Delancy; but she could not summon courage, and the opportunity was lost. She entered the castle without noise, and hastened to her chamber. It was a spacious, irregularly formed apartment, fitted up in a style of costly but gloomy magnificence. Her mind had not yet recovered its accustomed tone. She felt agitated and depressed. The moonlight that streamed through the open windows, crossed now and then by the shadows of the crimson curtains waving slowly in the night-breeze, shone, she imagined, with a ghastly and spectral light. As she cast a furtive glance around the room, the remote corners of which were wrapt in deep obscurity, her eyes were arrested, though she had often seen it before, by a full-length portrait of an old chieftain, the original owner of the castle, and concerning whom mysterious tales of horror and blood were often related by the ancient domestics when assembled round the winter hearth. As a single lamp, the only one in the chamber, shed over the picture a faint and flickering light, she almost imagined that she saw the high sable plumes of his casque, which seemed to press heavily on his dark and sullen brow, wave slowly to and fro, and the large and muscular hand, which was half thrust into the bosom, vibrate with an eager, convulsive motion, until she almost ex-

pected to see drawn thence, grasping the glittering blade, with which it was said he had given a final cure to the heart-ache of many a poor wretch who had long pined in the dungeons of the keep. Was it magnetism, or was the countenance really similar to that of Sir Edred Dymoke?

No, she could not be mistaken. There was an expression of the eye as it gleamed from beneath the impending brow, and a slight, nearly imperceptible curl of the lip that seemed the mockery of a smile, so exactly similar to what she had seen in the eye and on the lip of Sir Edred, as, regardless of her entreaties, he watched to see his falcon pounce upon her dove, when a slight whistle would have recalled the well-trained bird to his wrist, she felt that it could not be the illusion of an excited imagination. "And this is the man," thought she, "to whom Lady Morville has promised my hand, — a promise which she seeks to enforce by threats and commands. O my father, could you have foreseen the fate of your only child, when you gave her such a mother!"

The sound of persons approaching roused her from her painful reflections. It was her stepmother, preceded by a young girl who bore a lamp. There was a pride and stateliness apparent in the person of Lady Morville, that bespoke a consciousness of her noble birth and high station. She was above the common stature, and her features, though rather large and prominent, were decidedly handsome; but that soft and feminine expression was wanting, which portrays those amiable and gentle affections, which are alike the peculiar and appropriate characteristics of her sex.

Adela, who sat near the door, which on Lady Morville's entrance had been left unclosed, now saw the glimmering of a light in a gallery which led from the principal staircase, and which was intersected by numerous passages, winding in different directions. As the light drew nearer, she perceived it was borne by a page, whom she had commissioned to conduct the palmer to comfortable lodgings. He was followed by the holy man, who, by his erect and firm gait, appeared little to require the support of the staff which he bore in his hand. She kept her eye upon them, until she saw them enter a passage, which she knew terminated in an apartment next her own. The attention of Lady Morville in the mean time had been so engrossed by examining the arrow,

which Adela had forgotten to conceal, that she had not heeded the sound of their footsteps.

"Do you know who sped this arrow?" she at length said.

Adela replied in the negative.

"Know, then, it was Arthur Delancy, the craven foe of my kinsman's house."

"A foe he is to your kinsman's house undoubtedly," replied Adela, "but no craven, I believe."

"Say you so?" said Lady Morville, fixing her piercing eyes on Adela's face, as if she would thereby read the secrets of her heart.

"I do say so, Lady Morville; for fame, honestly and valiantly won, says the same."

"Have you seen this same valiant knight, since his return?" inquired her stepmother, regarding her with a glance still keener than before.

"Never. I was even ignorant, until now, that he had returned. The arrow might have been sped by him; but I saw him not."

"And yet you thought it worth preserving."

"It saved my dove."

"Perish thus, all who are the foes of the noble house of my ancestors," said Lady Morville suddenly, snapping the arrow in twain.

"O madam!" exclaimed Adela, "why did you break it?"

Lady Morville replied not, but regarded her daughter with a look in which anger and contempt appeared striving to gain the mastery.

After a silence of some time, —

"Promise me one thing," said she.

"Promise never to seek an interview with Arthur Delancy."

"Do you think me capable," said Adela indignantly, of seeking an interview with him, or with any other young man, unless it were required by some pressing occasion? No: I shall leave that office for him to perform."

"I claim your pardon," said Lady Morville, "but as the ideas of young ladies sometimes differ from those of their elders, I thought it not improbable, that your romantic notions of propriety might lead you to seek him, in order that you might pour forth your gratitude for the invaluable service he has rendered you, in saving the life of a dove."

Adela, who felt that she had better not

trust herself to reply to this sneering speech, remained silent.

At this moment the motto *Dieu et mon droit* inscribed on the shaft of the broken arrow, which she still retained in her hand, caught the eye of Lady Morville. She turned pale with anger, which at first choked her utterance.

"It was not to save the life of a paltry dove, then, that Delancy sent this arrow into the grounds of Sir Edred Dymoke, but rather to express his defiance of him and his prince."

"They were his own grounds, Lady Morville, until deprived of them by the mandate of a rash and hard-hearted prince. As for the motto it was, if I mistake not, assumed by King Richard, on gaining a victory over the French, and the arrows probably fell into Delancy's hands by accident."

"It is at least not an accident that he is a traitor to his lawful prince, and as such I will take measures to have him recognized ere another sun sink behind yonder mountains; and you, were it not that you can shelter yourself in the loyal house of my kinsman, would quickly find that even a woman's heart would not prove a sanctuary where rebellious sentiments may harbor with impunity."

"Lady Morville," said Adela, while her cheeks glowed, and her eyes sparkled, "my ancestors, on all occasions, have proved themselves true to their king and their country, and would not have been among the first to manifest their allegiance to an usuper, while their lawful sovereign languished in a foreign prison, — no, not even if an earldom had been offered as a recompense, — and never shall it be said that the last of their daughters had abjured her fidelity to a king so noble as Richard, even though the stake and fagot were resorted to as tests of her loyalty. From your kinsman's house, noble as you imagine it to be, she will neither claim nor accept protection. As respects Sir Edred Dymoke, personally, whatever wrongs he might sustain while at feud with the father, I should think he might feel himself amply avenged, by seeing the son deprived of his heritage, and cast forth as a vagrant upon the wide world, without pursuing him with further persecution."

"By my troth," said Lady Morville, "you have bold thoughts for a damsel newly escaped from her teens, and a bolder tongue

wherewith to utter them. When I was of your age, I was content to model my opinions by those of persons older and wiser. It may be, that you've been taking counsel of some of those visionaries, who believe that Richard may yet return."

"I have taken counsel of no person," replied Adela, "but I believe that King Richard lives in too many hearts to be suffered to die in a foreign prison. Prince John, with his splendor and pageantry, may for a season dazzle the eyes of his countrymen; yet he can never permanently sow in their hearts the seeds of disloyalty."

"I see that you inherit your late father's obstinacy of opinion," said Lady Morville, rising to depart. "I must commission my cousin Dymoke to convince you of the fallacy of your assertions."

Pride and an excited state of feeling had sustained Adela, while in the presence of her stepmother; but, the moment she was left alone, the threat, uttered during their interview concerning Delancy, presented itself to her imagination in alarming colors, and prevented repose for the night. Could she have foreseen the events which were shortly to transpire, her fears in that respect would have been allayed; events which so engrossed the attention of Lady Morville that she had neither leisure nor inclination to execute her threat.

CHAPTER III.

The sun had not yet risen the following morning, when a stranger on horseback arrived at Norbury Castle, and requested to speak with Sir Edred Dymoke.

"Conduct him into the hall, and see that he has refreshment," said Sir Edred to the servant who had announced the stranger's arrival. "I will see him forthwith."

"I must see him in a private apartment," said the stranger, in answer to Sir Edred's message, "and that, before I eat or drink."

As soon as he was shown into the presence of Sir Edred he presented to him a small packet, and said, —

"From Prince John."

"Does your master think that I've been shut up in a closet," said Sir Edred, "that I might learn to handle a pen instead of a sword? Return and tell him that I have not been so pitifully employed."

"He bid me tell you, in case that you

could not read what was contained in the packet, that you must set out immediately for Leeds Castle, where he now is, as he will trust no one else with its contents."

"Impossible," said Sir Edred. "I have an engagement to fulfill this evening, which I cannot break."

"Nevertheless, it must be broken," was the reply. "If you find him standing before the priest, by the side of the fair Adela," said the prince, "tell him not to delay to do my bidding."

"If it must be so," said Sir Edred, "I wish I had a scribe at hand, to write a message to Delancy."

"There must be no time lost in hunting for scribes, or in writing messages. We have already tarried too long. Let us to horse without delay."

"Not if the prince were a king, would I go till I had met Delancy. Jock Reeder, come hither," said he to a lad, who was that moment passing the hall door. "Now go to the hut of the old herdsman, who lives by the side of the hill, and see if Arthur Delancy is there. If he be, tell him that I am waiting for him at the old watch-tower, things having so turned out that it will be impossible for me to meet him at the hour appointed. Instead of waiting till evening I must meet him this morning. Tell him furthermore that I will abide his coming, till the sun looks through the uppermost branches of yonder oak, that rises so loftily against the eastern sky. Do you understand, sirrah, what I've been saying to you?"

"I do, sir."

"Run, then, as if you were the messenger of the winds, and mind that you commit no blunder in telling your errand."

The boy darted away in the direction of the herdsman's hut, while Sir Edred, after making the necessary preparations, repaired to the place appointed. Jock met the herdsman at a short distance from his dwelling, who told him that Delancy was within, but was busy and could not be disturbed.

"I have a message for him, from Sir Edred Dymoke," said the boy, "but I suppose it will be as well to deliver it to you, if you will promise to tell him without delay."

He accordingly told the herdsman his errand, who immediately comprehended its bearing, when he recalled to mind a few words inadvertently dropped by Delancy the preceding evening. He as quickly deter-

mined that he would suffer Delancy to remain ignorant of Sir Edred's message.

"Never," said he to himself, "shall my young master's blood gild the sword of so thorough-bred a villain as Sir Edred Dymoke."

Sir Edred having in the mean time arrived at the watch-tower walked to and fro before it with impatient steps, awaiting Delancy's arrival; and it was not until the sun had emerged from the loftiest branches of the oak, that he returned slowly and reluctantly to the castle, internally heaping imprecations on the delinquent's head. Two of his own horses, according to his orders, stood ready in the court-yard; one for himself, the other for the messenger of Prince John. Just as the latter was going to spring to the saddle, he took a letter from his bosom, and, handing it to the boy who stood near, remarked he had come near forgetting one-half of his errand, and bid him hand it to Lady Morville.

After a few hours' hard riding, they took fresh horses which were in readiness for them at an inn. It was past mid-day when they arrived at Leeds Castle. Sir Edred, according to orders which had been given, was immediately ushered into the presence of Prince John. The prince's love of splendor was apparent in the decorations of the apartment, and in his own person; he being attired in a suit of black velvet, embroidered with gold, while precious stones glistened in profusion wherever there was opportunity for display. He was reclining on an ottoman, a luxury introduced from the East by the Crusaders. Several young men, who appeared ambitious to emulate him in the magnificence of their apparel, stood near, listening to his remarks, or attempting to reply to some question; for there was a singular impatience in his manner which impelled him to interrupt whoever attempted to speak, by some new comment or inquiry. He greeted Sir Edred in a gay and careless tone, but an observant eye could perceive in his appearance a kind of intermingling of gayety and gloom; his smiles, like sunshine on a thunder-cloud, serving only to make the darkness of his brow more apparent.

"Did you read what I sent you by my messenger, my good Edred?" he inquired.

"Deshrew me, prince, if I had not as lief you would ask me if I had been twirling the distaff with my lady's maids: for in my

mind the one would be an employment equally befitting a thorough-bred soldier as the other."

"We claim courtesy for ourself, Sir Edred, in unluckily having some knowledge of an art you so much disdain, but your own ignorance matters not, since you have shown so much diligence in coming to our presence. In good sooth, Sir Edred, we have it in mind to hold a tournament, and have already made arrangements to send heralds throughout every part of the kingdom to make known our intention, that there may not be a noble nor a lady in the land, who will not have an opportunity of witnessing the prowess and bravery of those knights who may take a part in the entertainment."

"A pretty matter, by my halidom, to affect so much secrecy and haste about," said Sir Edred, with a darkened countenance. "I want none of your mock combats, when those in good earnest can be had at every turn."

"Nay, good Edred," said the prince in a soothing tone, "give us your countenance and advice in the present instance, and we may at another time find you employment more to your taste. De Burgh," said the prince, turning to one of those present, "we would talk this matter over with Sir Edred."

De Burgh and the others, at this information, withdrew, when Prince John, rising, and taking a letter from a small cabinet, said, —

"Now that we have gotten rid of those, who, with the exception of De Burgh, are a set of chattering fools, I will inform you of the real reason of my message to you. Know you this seal?" holding up the letter.

"I know it well. It is Philip's of France."

"Right. You hear and interpret its contents."

He opened the letter, and read the following significant words: —

"Take care of yourself! The devil is loose!"

"The meaning of which is, your brother Richard is at liberty."

"Even so. See you not now, Edred, more policy than folly in making this festival? Be assured that the field of a tournament affords an easy path to the heart of a young and brave knight, when warned and cheered by the smiles of his lady-love. Already is rumor, which I believe must be the

avant-courier of the winds, busy in speaking of Richard's release, and something must be done to win the people to my cause, or it, at once, will shake hands with ruin, while you, Sir Edred, must bid farewell to your earldom, before we have learned to give you your titles, for this Delancy, if fame speak true, especially if he can have Richard to appeal to, is no hilding to sit quietly down, and see another man in possession of his domains."

"As you say, prince, there is policy in assembling the people round your person, and this tournament may afford a specious pretext; but suffer me to tell you, that all the show and splendor of such a field would in English eyes be but a rushlight compared with the sun, should Richard, and half a score of those brave knights who fought with him in Palestine, present themselves before the multitude, and" —

"Sirrah!" interrupted the prince, while his cheek was flushed with anger, "I did not summon you hither, that you might have opportunity to draw invidious comparisons. Your personal interest in this is as great as mine. Had it not been so, I should have hesitated about sending for you, and still more in asking your advice; for I have long known that man finds in self the only true bond which binds him to another's interest."

"I trust, prince," said Sir Edred in a humble tone, "that no other motive to render my poor, humble assistance will be necessary than that which may be found in my loyalty."

"I trust so too; though I confess that I have ever found that loyalty which is quickened by self-interest more zealous than any other."

"Nevertheless, prince, if you would give me leave, I could prove my allegiance more effectually than by the method you propose."

"How? In what way?"

"The person of Richard is so well known to me, that I think I could detect him through any disguise. He must perforce, from its proximity to the sea-shore, pass my — that is, Norburg Castle, before he can traverse any considerable portion of the kingdom. He will doubtless claim hospitality at the castle, which, if it please you, he shall find in the keep which lacks not for bolt or bar."

"Nay, gentle Edred," said the prince,

"such things are apt to transpire, and I fear he has too strong a hold on the affection of the people to make it safe to venture on so bold a step; yet, if you could do it without its getting rumored abroad, the coronet should be so fastened on your brow that not a hand in England would be strong enough to pluck it thence."

"But, should all our projects fail, what is to insure it to me?"

A nearly imperceptible smile passed over the countenance of the prince as he replied, —

"Do you ask what is to insure it to you? You yourself very well know."

"I can think of more ways than one."

"The death of the heir would be the most certain."

"But he still lives, and is in usual good health."

"And yet he may die."

"There's nothing which points to such an issue."

"Steel might be made to."

"True, prince. That might prove a sharp argument in my favor."

"And a sure one. How speeds your suit with the fair Adela?"

"You had better ask, how stands my suit: for I have not advanced one inch in her favor since first I attempted to win it; or, if I have advanced any way, it must have been backward, as your subjects of the Green Isle might say."

"That weighs very little, since Lady Morville is your friend. I have commanded her to be present, with her fair charge, to grace our revels. I have, moreover, hinted to her that it will be well to prepare a bridal-wreath; for I am resolved, among other things, to have a wedding, and that you, Sir Knight, shall be the bridegroom."

"A resolve to which I will not say nay; for I have great lack of honeyed words to whisper into a lady's ear, and by marriage I shall reduce their necessity quite to their lack."

"But remember, although I have gone so far as to speak of a wedding, that this fair and rich prize is to be won on your part by the performance of certain good services. You must not expect golden apples to fall into your lap: you must reach forth your hand, and pluck them from the tree, not forgetting to throw one, now and then, to him who helped you to a ladder. Do you understand?"

"Ay, prince; and, what is better, I will remember."

"Above all things, let it be your aim to see how the nobility stand affected toward me; for although there be a few among the courtiers, who, seeing my power, based, as they fondly imagine, on a sandy foundation, think it not worth their while to spread the gloss of flattery and plausibility over their demeanor, but use so much freedom in my presence, that, were their opinions written on the sleeves of their doublets, I could not read them much more readily, the majority keep dark; and it is in them where lies the secret spring which must give impulse to the great mass, as well as the power to direct it, when given. You well know, my good Edred, how to give to craft and cunning a certain frankness of aspect, which will take a man off his guard, and tempt him to show his heart to you. If I mistake not, you can manage such business more gingerly than the best courtier of them all, though he have a bow and a smile for every word he utter."

"I will manage, prince, to the best of my poor ability."

"I doubt it not. Leave me now, good Edred, for by this time you must stand in need of the refreshment ordered to be in readiness for you."

As soon as Sir Edred left him, the prince opened the door of a small antechamber, intending to enter, but immediately started back, as if something disagreeable or alarming met his sight. His hesitation was only momentary. Entering and closing the door, he advanced to a part of the room which commanded a favorable view of the offensive object, with an air that seemed to say, "I will compel myself to look at it." It was the portrait of his brother Richard, which, according to his command, he imagined had been removed from the apartment. Filled with the guilty consciousness of having just consented to the proposition of Sir Edred relative to his brother's imprisonment, he almost imagined that his living form was before him. Unconsciously, perhaps, to himself, he gave utterance to his thoughts.

"How legibly," he said, "is power written in every line of the face! And that eye — there is something in the calm yet searching look, which must insure obedience. I quail beneath it. What then must be its lightning flash, when kindled with anger? It seems even now to read that

secret of my heart which I have striven so hard to hide, to banish even from myself. Ay! read, if thou wilt, my plottings against thy liberty; but that thought, nursed only in the darkest corner of the murderer's heart, — must that eagle glance search out even that? Let it. Exchange of circumstances would make him like me. Those upon whom Fortune has set her ban are forced to vile arts which lead to viler deeds. He who would climb the ladder which leads to the throne must have a hard conscience; one that will not cry out, though its owner have now and then to make a step on the dead body of a kinsman, and even a — nay, I will not think the rest. Yet, how is the end to be accomplished without the means? Fate has recorded that I shall be a king, for a seer once told me that on Ascension Day I should resign my crown; therefore, as that which was never possessed cannot resigned, I must be a king in spite of Richard."

CHAPTER IV.

Leaning against the western side of the old watch-tower, already alluded to, stood a young girl, apparently absorbed in melancholy thought. She would have made a picture not unworthy the artist's pencil, as she stood by that "stern round tower of other days," the rich attire which fell gracefully around her slight form, brightened by the declining sunlight, and the dark glossy curls even which flowed back from her forehead and temples, stealing a tinge of its departing glory. She thought she heard a footstep, and the dark and dreaded form of Sir Edred arose to her imagination. The next moment brought with it the cheering thought that he was far away, and she again resigned herself to melancholy musings of former days.

"Adela!" said a voice near, "Adela!"

The blood rushed to Adela's face, for there were tones in that voice which in memory had never slept; and, when she looked in the direction whence the voice proceeded, an expression of doubt and inquiry was painted on her countenance.

"Know you not Arthur Delancy?" said the person who had pronounced her name, in answer to her look of inquiry. "Have two years' absence and the burning clime of a distant land changed me so much?"

"They have indeed changed you," she

replied. "You went away with a bright, undaunted brow, and clad in such gay and costly military trappings as were proper and worthy a beloved and trusted officer of King Richard."

"Could it be otherwise, Adela? Wealth and power have been wrested from me. I am a houseless wanderer, and my deadliest foe sits by the hearthstone where passed the gayest and happiest hours of my childhood. There is not a being, since I set foot on my native land, who has not greeted me with frowns, or at best a cold and heartless welcome, except my late father's herdsman. Even you, Adela, turned on me a cold and doubtful look; while had your form appeared before me, in the midst of the Paynim host, my heart, unchilled by a moment's doubt, would have sprung to meet you."

"Do not reproach me, Arthur, for in looks you have, as I've already said, greatly changed. Nought save your voice and your eye are true to the record which memory has faithfully kept. And these are enough, if with them you could have brought back the bright, cheerful smile of those other days."

"Smiles, Adela, cannot light the brow when the heart is torn and withered. Although I have lain alone at midnight, on the arid sands of Arabia, with not even a solitary palm for the breeze to whisper to, or on which the moonbeams might linger and play ere they fell coldly on me, the sense of loneliness pressed less heavily on my heart then than it since has in my native land; for at those seasons your form would come to me like a bright bird winging its way over the desert. Adela, it can come to me thus no more."

"And why, Delancy?"

"Because you can never be mine. Think not I would link your fate with that of a vagrant."

"Arthur Delancy," said she solemnly and impressively, "my troth-vow was yours when we parted; it is yours now; it shall ever remain yours."

"Are you indeed thus firm? Then my vow is, even by the sword that once saved Cœur de Lion's life, that I will claim its fulfillment, but not till the wife of Arthur Delancy can in rank be as proud and as high as if she were the wife of Sir Edred Dymoke, although she could thus call herself a countess. Thus," locking her right hand in his, "be my vow joined with yours, and

may misery and mishap lie in my path if I voluntarily break it!"

"And in my path if I break mine, if prince or even king should command me to do so."

At this moment a hand fell heavily on Adela's shoulder; and, looking around, she beheld her stepmother, her features wearing an expression of anger too deep and determined to vent itself in passionate words. In silence she drew Adela's hand under her arm, and turned haughtily away, first casting on Delancy a look, to which, had it been in her power, she would have imparted the petrifying qualities of a Gorgon's. With rapid steps she proceeded homeward, regardless of the faltering walk of Adela, who was almost sinking to the ground with agitation. Adela ventured one look toward Delancy, just as the direction they were about to take would hide him from sight. He pronounced the single word "beware," in a voice which reached both heart and ear, and its effect was to give her new courage, and to impel her to persevere in the accomplishment of a just determination.

When arrived at the castle, Adela hoped that her mother would permit her to retire to her own room; but, retaining a firm grasp upon her hand, she led her to her own apartment, and commanded her to be seated. Lady Morville then ordered candles; for, although it was a clear, golden sunset, gloom already pervaded the room, the oak wainscoting being darkened by time, and the high, narrow window being shaded with heavy green curtains.

As soon as lights were brought, Lady Morville handed the letter to Adela which she had that morning received from Prince John, and, with a smile that expressed anything rather than those bland emotions smiles are intended to indicate, said, —

"Read that, and then judge if even a prince — we say nothing of a king — may not move you to break your rash vow."

The little color which until then had remained forsook Adela's lip and cheek as her eye traced the contents of the letter, but her resolve remained firm and unwavering.

"No, Lady Morville," said she, "neither promises nor threats from Prince John will incline me to break a vow, the sanctity of which is protected by a promise given to the last wish of a dying parent; and though

the voice that expressed that wish be silent in the grave, it still appeals to my heart with a mute eloquence which I feel it would be sacrilegious to disregard."

"Even filial obedience," said Lady Morville, "should yield to our loyalty as subjects to the king, and I doubt not but yours would be of a more pliant nature did it clash with inclination. You see, by this letter, that a refusal to comply with the wishes of the prince will place you in a convent for life."

"Rather," said Adela, "for the time the prince retains his power."

"I should pity you for your contumacy, were you blinded by ignorance; now I can give you only reproach and contempt. You may retire now; and, when we meet on the morrow, I trust you will be prepared to yield to the wishes of Prince John and Sir Edred gracefully, as you must be aware that resistance will avail you nothing."

As Adela was passing through the corridor which led to her chamber, she again encountered the palmer. She started at his unexpected appearance, and remarked that she had been told that he departed early in the morning.

"I did go," was his reply, "but certain circumstances, with which I became acquainted, together with some I knew before, induced me to return. Ask me no questions, but promise so far to yield to Lady Morville's wishes as to attend the tournament. I have but a moment to spare. Will you promise?"

"I will."

"Good-night then, and be confident that all will be well."

"Good-night," said Adela, and in a few moments the sound of the palmer's receding footsteps were lost in the distance.

CHAPTER V.

The brevity which we wish to observe compels us to pass on to the day appointed for the tournament, which dawned with unclouded splendor.

The field was listed in at no great distance from the castle of Leeds, and there was not a road or a lane throughout the rich and beautiful County of Kent which was not alive with nobles, knights, and squires gallantly mounted on superb horses, escorting ladies richly dressed, down to the common people, who by the gentry were courteously

denominated "villeyne," or "rascall people," all urging their way toward the spot destined for the entertainment.

There was one young man among the pedestrians who walked with so rapid a step that those few who from time to time attempted to bear him company soon fell behind. When about midway between the castle and the lists, he turned aside, a short distance from the road, and seated himself under a large oak, which yielded a cool, inviting shade, where he intently scrutinized each group of lords and ladies as it passed. But the ardent curiosity which sparkled in his eyes, as they successively appeared in view, gave place to a look of cold indifference as their near approach gave him opportunity to distinguish their persons. He had remained there only a short time when he was joined by a palmer, whose stately bearing showed him to be the same who a few days previous craved hospitality of Adela. Although there was not wanting those who, under the pretence of a desire to rest, hovered near in the hope to catch some word to satisfy the curiosity which these two unknown persons had awakened, their conversation, though earnest, was in a tone so low that their praiseworthy attempts remained unrewarded. At this moment, a company of persons approached, which had the effect to immediately arrest the conversation. Those composing the group were evidently recognized by both; but while our young pedestrian regarded them with those fluctuations of countenance which bespoke a deep and agitating interest in some one, or all of them, the palmer's cold, serene gaze seemed like a wintry sky without a cloud.

The most imposing figure in this equestrian group was a lady past her youthful prime, yet still eminently handsome, and of a haughty, most queenlike presence. She rode gracefully, managing with ease her high-spirited horse whose magnificent housings glistened brightly in the morning sunbeams. On a fine-looking palfrey rode another lady, a lovely girl, whose dejected air showed that her heart and thoughts were far away from the pomp and pageantry of the scene. By her side rode a man, whose scarlet dress decorated with gold and jewels indicated him to be a knight. His visor was up; and the keen, restless eye, which gleamed from beneath an impending brow, the thin lips half curled into a sort of triumphant smile whenever he looked on the

beautiful girl by his side, showed all who had ever glanced at that face before that it was Sir Edred Dymoke.

The younger lady, to whose cheeks even exercise and the fresh morning air had failed to restore the bloom withered by fear and harrowing sorrow, blushed as her eye caught sight of two men resting under the oak. The blush was succeeded by a sudden paleness, accompanied with a sickening sensation, which caused her for a moment to sit unsteadily in the saddle. The momentary slackening of the reins caused by her faintness occasioned her to fall a little behind, while, at the same time, she unconsciously let fall her handkerchief.

The crowd now near the lists had become so dense, that those on horseback made slow progress; and Adela, for a few moments, was separated from her companions. While endeavoring to regain her station by Lady Morville, who had missed her, and was now waiting for her, a boy, touching her arm, presented the handkerchief she had dropped. It was slightly folded, and, as she held out her hand to receive it, he said in a low voice, —

"There is a paper within it, which fall not to read the first opportunity."

She promised to attend to his request, and the boy disappeared without having attracted Lady Morville's attention.

They now drew near the field, and a most magnificent spectacle presented itself to their view. The galleries, which were raised around for the accomodation of spectators, were draped with rich silks, and cloth of gold; while pavilions, interspersed here and there, were ornamented in a style gayer, and still more costly. Bright and many-colored banners floated over them, and around the field; the whole scene acquiring spirit and life from the appearance of the heralds and pursuivants, who, in dresses of the gayest and most splendid colors, moved lightly from place to place, as well as from warlike music by bands stationed for the purpose, which, at intervals, sent abroad their spirit-stirring sounds on the morning breeze.

Lady Morville and Adela were conducted to a pavilion exactly opposite the one expressly prepared for the young and rich heiress of Gloucester, the chosen queen of the field, who was subsequently married to Prince John. Here, Adela, by screening the paper she had received by the folds of

her mantle, found opportunity to read it; It ran thus:—

"Fear not, fair lady, that you will be compelled to marry Sir Edred Dymoke. There are not wanting true knights and brave, who will not stand idly by, nor attempt to defend a defenceless damsel against injustice and oppression. Appear to yield to the desires of your persecutors, and, in due time, you shall be delivered from their power. Your friend, **THE PALMER.**"

While preparations were making for the champions to enter the lists, the spectators had good opportunity to gaze on the garments of the young nobles, and especially those of the ladies under their protection, which, though glistening with gold and jewels, were, as a chronicler no doubt justly observes, frequently outshone by the beauty of their faces.

The eyes of Adela, instead of being thus employed, were in search of Delancy; but he was nowhere to be seen. Even the palmer, whose commanding figure would have rendered him conspicuous among the crowd, was not visible. Her heart almost sank within her, at this apparent desertion, and she was only able to re-assure herself by thinking of the verbal as well as written promise of the palmer, who certainly could have no motive in tampering with her.

The herald now appeared, and, after reading the regulations of the sport, exhibited the prize, which was a coronet of laurel; a costly diamond, wrung from one of that oppressed race, the Jews, to whom Prince John had the reputation of frequently applying in his necessities, being employed to secure the tasteful arrangement of those leaves composing the front. Two knights with closed visors then entered the lists, and their weapons were examined by an officer appointed to that duty. One of the knights was Sir Edred Dymoke, and Adela saw, with anger, the manifestation of which she could not wholly suppress, that he wore her colors on his shield. Added to his family arms, was a hand grasping a coronet, under which was inscribed the motto, "I take."

The preparations being completed, the herald shouted "*Laissez aller!*" when each knight, followed respectively by their squires, dashed forward to the encounter. The opponent of Sir Edred was apparently much younger than himself, and of a slight,

er form. Several times, during the preparations, he was observed, with rather an agitated air, to direct his regards to a young and beautiful girl, in the gallery, whose favor he wore in his crest; and who, although she smiled on him encouragingly, was pale with apprehension. At the first onset, the youthful knight broke his spear midway between the saddle and helmet of Sir Edred; thus gaining, according to the rules of chivalry, one point of honor, while the lance of his antagonist only glanced slightly against his armor. The herald, meantime, strove to cheer the combatants by quaint and appropriate exclamations, such as, — "Honor to the brave! Love and glory united!" together with others of similar import.

Sir Edred found that he had thought too lightly of his opponent, and prepared for the next assault with a cooler eye and steadier aim. Rushing impetuously forward, he directed his spear against the young knight's helmet with such force, that, stunned by the shock, he reeled, and fell to the ground. On examination, it was found that the fallen knight was so far disabled, as to render it necessary to bear him from the field. His fate excited much commiseration among the fairer portion of the spectators, and the sentiment was heightened, when they saw the distress of the young and handsome maiden in the gallery. In the mean time, strains of martial music, and the plaudits of a portion of the spectators, saluted the victor, whose success excited the emulation of the other champions to become his competitors.

As the last acclamation died away, a champion presented himself, whose appearance attracted uncommon attention. He rode a coal-black steed, and his armor was of the same hue. The bearing of his shield was simply a cypress wreath; the motto, "*Death, or the lost re-won.*" His port and bearing were those of one whom the presence of kings and princes could not abash. A cry was almost immediately raised, that the shield of the knight, who now presented himself, had not, according to custom, been exposed at the place appointed, in order to give those cavaliers wishing to join in the combat a mutual opportunity to make exceptions, if any existed; why such should be made to the owner of any particular shield. The kings of arms and judges of the field were about to pronounce the order for his

exclusion, when Prince John, struck with his gallant appearance, requested, as a particular favor, that he might be allowed to try his prowess. The young knight gracefully bowed his thanks, and the judges, not without some murmurings, acceded to the prince's request. But here an unexpected objection was made by Sir Edred.

"By the sacred rights of knighthood," he exclaimed, "if I stoop to oppose myself to this craven! dastard! recreant! poltroon! or if there be a baser, more villainous appellation, it will only the better suit him, it shall not be with headless spear, or blunted sword. He has already failed to meet me on equal ground, where his heart's blood or that of mine should have washed away the foul opprobrium we mutually cast upon each other."

"Who is this knight," inquired the prince, "with whom you have a private quarrel, most unseasonably brought forth to mar the day's sport?"

"I am Arthur Delancy," said the young knight, before Sir Edred had time to reply to the question; "and you yourself may best judge whether one on whom Cœur de Lion conferred knighthood with his own hand, and permitted to fight by his side in the Holy Land, is likely to merit such vile epithets. But, though the utterance of such falsehood should have power to burn his cheek with the blush of shame, his reference to the sacredness of knighthood should sear it with the deepest marks of infamy, when, in open violation of its requirements, he hesitates not, instead of succoring, to oppress the helpless orphan."

"This is a bold charge," said the prince, "to prefer against one whom we have ever deemed one of our most loyal servants. How comes it, Sir Knight, that you failed to meet him, according to appointment?"

"I kept the appointment, Prince John," replied Delancy, "punctually and truly. It was he himself who failed; but I was willing to excuse the delinquency when I ascertained the cause."

"Believe me, prince," said Sir Edred, "that this is a most base fabrication, invented to screen his cowardice. Upon the very moment of receiving your summons, I sent a messenger to announce to him the necessity of my immediate departure, notwithstanding which he would find me prepared to meet him at the place, though not at the hour appointed; for, until I had blot-

ted out by his blood the wounds made in my honor, by his taunting words, I felt myself unworthy to appear in your presence."

"Gentlemen," said the prince, "it is not fitting that the day's diversion should be destroyed by the untimely exhibition of your quarrels. Delancy, I command you to leave the field, which, according to the rules of chivalry, your not presenting your shield for examination, is debarred you, and lest you should feel aggrieved by this prohibition, we agree to grant to you, and to Sir Edred, at the conclusion of the tournament, the *joute a plaisance*, in which we doubt not that justice will arbitrate between you and crown him with victory whose cause is just."

"Not so, prince," said Sir Edred, with rekindling ire. "I will never meet Delancy in the joust of peace. In the combat at outrance, if it please you, I am ready to try weapons with him. Blood must wash out the stain on his honor, or mine."

"His zeal to have it thus washed out cannot be greater than mine," said Delancy, "and if it be your pleasure to grant his request, I shall be well content."

"With the approval of the judges of the field, and of this good assembly, I willingly accord it," replied the prince.

This answer was received with loud cheers by the multitude, while Delancy, raising his visor, and gracefully bowing, left the lists. We know not what effect the sight of his handsome and noble countenance had on hearts that beat beneath the cuirass, but by certain unequivocal signs, we are certain that it proved a passport to the favor of more than one defended by no stouter armor than silk and satin.

The champions now renewed the combat with redoubled ardor, and many were the deeds of prowess individually performed, yet so decided was the superiority of Sir Edred Dymoke, that the judges could not hesitate in awarding to him the prize.

All eyes were now turned toward the young heiress of Gloucester, who stood with the wreath of laurel in her hand. She was dressed in a high tunic of gold brocade wrought with flowers of the richest colors, and confined round the waist by a zone enriched by gold and precious stones. Jewelled rings and bracelets sparkled on hands and arms, while

"Her locks profuse of paly gold"

floated loosely over her shoulders. An ill-disguised look of aversion was visible on her beautiful features, while, as the victor paused before her, she bestowed on him the meed of his bravery; and when, according to invariable custom, she slightly touched his cheek with her lips, there was an unmistakable recoil of her whole person. This did not escape the keen eye of Lady Morville, who, in lack of the legitimate object whereon to vent her wrath involuntarily it was said, gave the merlin, or sparrow-hawk which she bore on her wrist, so sharp a pinch, that it uttered a piercing scream, which in turn elicited a response from several terror-stricken damsels in the immediate vicinity. The glances of the spectators were almost equally divided between the young queen of the field, and the still lover-lie Adela, whose gold-embroidered robe was of

"The subtlest web
From India's loom, clear glancing like the
snow,"

while over all, "a long, transparent veil floated round her form like a cloud of light."

CHAPTER VI.

A very short interval sufficed for refreshment, and requisite preparation for the anticipated rencounter between Sir Edred and Delancy. Adela was sustained by the very excess of her excitement. Those who saw her in the morning, pale as a marble statue, could have scarcely recognized the maiden now before them with glowing cheeks, ruby lips, and sparkling eyes. Yet she betrayed no emotion by either word or gesture. The trembling of the white hand as it rested on the railing, and a rose which adorned her bosom as on its slender stem it vibrated to the tumultuous throbings of her heart, alone told that all was not calm and passionless within.

Adela had taken off one of her net gloves, of such gossamer texture it might have been woven of some fairy's silken ringlets, and thrown it carelessly over her arm, a few minutes before the knights had appeared outside the barrier.

Lady Morville, when she beheld her kinsman, deliberately took the glove, and, without saying a word to her daughter, gave it

to a page, and ordered him to carry it to Sir Edred, as a favor to wear in his crest.

When Adela found that her attempts to prevent its being sent were in vain, resentment for a moment stilled the tremor of her nerves, and gave her courage to retaliate. Seizing a poniard which her own page wore in his belt, she severed one of the long, silky tresses of her hair, and sent it to Delancy.

He pressed the gift to his heart and lips, and the next moment it was waving over his helmet, while inwardly he breathed a vow, that every hair, which he valued more than gold or diamonds, should remain bright and unsullied.

As the champions were about to enter the lists, a profound silence pervaded the assembly, so that the softest whisper or the rustle of a silken garment might be distinctly heard. The peril attendant on the anticipated combat produced an excitement, an all-powerful interest, which the sports of the morning had failed to produce.

The two knights now appeared at their respective stations; and, at the sound of the trumpet, each dashed forward with the speed of the wind. Sir Edred aimed his spear at Delancy's helmet; but the long ringlet of hair, which he wore in his crest, waving and glancing in the sunlight, served to embarrass him, and divert his attention, — probably in the same way that a hankerchief, bound round the head of an experienced duelist, with a corner left loose and floating, it has been said on one occasion, so marred the aim of his antagonist as to make it inefficient. At any rate, instead of the powerful blow Sir Edred intended, his weapon only slightly glanced against his opponent's helmet; while, in return, Delancy's spear as slightly touched his shoulder.

The result of the next onset was equally undecisive, and it became apparent that the skill and prowess of the two combatants were about equally matched.

"A curse on that lock of hair!" muttered Sir Edred between his teeth. "I wish that that and its mates were at the bottom of the Thames, and their owner along with them."

The next assault, as before, Sir Edred couched his lance, as if he intended to aim at his adversary's head; but, just as they met, he suddenly rose in his stirrups, so as to make the strength of his whole body, as

that of his aim, effective, and with the same motion brought his weapon to a level with Delancy's breast, which, owing to the foregoing feint, was left partly unprotected by his shield. Delancy for a moment was swayed by the shock, like the sapling which bends before the tempest; and, when again he took his station at the end of the lists, those near him perceived that his breastplate was stained with blood. But he continued to sit firmly on the saddle; and the experienced eye could see, by his movements and bearing, that he was collecting all his energies for a final conflict. The spectators almost forgot to breathe while the opponents again rushed to meet each other with equal firmness and impetuosity. By suddenly reining aside his steed at the moment of meeting, in a manner which none but an accomplished horseman could have done, and retained his seat, Delancy shunned the lance of Sir Edred, and at the same moment struck his own with all his might against his opponent's helmet. The shock which Sir Edred received, together with the momentum of his own body, — to which, by the failure of his own blow, there was no check, — caused him to lose his balance, and, reeling, he fell to the ground. He was perfectly motionless; and Delancy, springing from his horse, before any other hand had time to lend its aid, —

"Untied the visor's iron band," —

so that he might have the benefit of the free air. He was merely stunned by the blow, and soon showed signs of revival.

Delancy fell back as Sir Edred's friends gathered round him, and, while the air still resounded with acclamations in praise of his victory, slipped quietly from the crowd, and was no more seen.

Prince John, as soon as Sir Edred was sufficiently recovered, accompanied by his more intimate friends, among whom were included Lady Morville and Adela, proceeded to Leeds Castle, other lords and ladies following in their train. After them came the multitude, eager to partake of the good cheer provided on such occasions, as well as to share in the festivity and mirth. They alighted from their horses when near the castle; and Lady Morville was proceeding to the hall-door, escorted by the prince, leaving Adela to receive the same piece of service from Sir Edred.

But the long silken ringlet was still in the mind's eye of the discomfited knight, which had a great effect in damping his gallantry, so that, instead of suiting his steps to the more moderate gait of a lady, he strode forward at such a rate as to leave Adela quite a distance in the rear.

Just at this crisis, she felt a hand grasp her arm, while a familiar voice whispered in her ear, —

"Now, Adela, is the time. Place yourself under my protection."

It was the voice of Delancy; but she was perplexed by perceiving that the person now by her side was clad in armor entirely different from that which he wore in the combat. There was no time, however, for doubt or hesitation. Obeying the swift impulse of his hand, the next moment she stood with him by a fine-looking horse, which appeared fresh and in high life, as if just led from the stable.

"So light to the croup the lady he swung,
So light to the saddle before her he sprung."

Delancy did not suffer his horse to slacken his speed till the spires of a ruined abbey, rising above a forest, were dimly descried through the deepening shadows of evening. The difficulties of the path, it being overgrown with the rich luxuriance of untrained shrubbery, made it necessary to alight; and a man soon appeared, who silently took charge of the horse.

Delancy conducted Adela into the chapel, which was brilliantly lighted. A priest stood at the altar; and, near by, a knight, armed *cap à pie*, of most majestic mien; while at a little distance sat three ladies,

the elder of whom Delancy introduced to Adela as his maternal aunt, and the others as her daughters.

"You may well imagine," said Delancy, addressing Adela, "that I have forgotten the promise I made you when last we met, — that I never would claim you for my wife till you could rank as high as if you you were the wife of Sir Edred Dymoke. Since then, I have become acquainted with circumstances which show that the close of another day will restore to England its king, and to me my paternal domains. Are you willing to risk the failure of my prediction?"

"I am," was Adela's reply.

"Perhaps," said the tall, stately-looking knight standing near, "as there is no one present who can claim the right of giving away the bride, I may be permitted the honor."

Without further delay, the ceremony was performed which made Adela the wife of Delancy.

From the first, Adela had recognized, in the voice of the armed knight, that of her late friend, the palmer. He now raised his visor, and disclosed to her the well-remembered features of Richard, Cœur de Lion. He had escaped from prison, and, by means of his disguise, had succeeded in reaching his native land, where he was soon restored to the throne.

Through the mediation of his mother, he pardoned his brother, Prince John, who took up arms against him.

"I forgive you," said Richard; "and I hope I shall as easily forget my injuries as you will my pardon."

BELLE'S LAST FLIRTATION.

BY ELIZABETH BIGELOW.

"There! I will wear Mr. Hoffman's red roses, — they are so beautiful with my dress, and so becoming to my complexion. Charley will be furious, of course, but I can't be troubled about his jealous whims. Put that lovely cluster a little higher in the puffs of my hair, Lizette, and loop my overskirt with the other. There! Miss Meyer, don't you like that?"

Miss Meyer was the young woman who had brought the dress home from Madame Dumesnil's. She was considered to have wonderful taste, and she always staid to see the dress tried on, and make any alterations that might be needed, and suggest the ornaments to be worn with it.

She stood off at a little distance, with her head on one side, and gazed critically at the beautiful Miss Creighton; a beautiful little creature, herself, in spite of a mournful droop at the corner of her mouth, and some faint little lines of care. Her very ideal of Marguerite in "Faust," Miss Creighton declared her to be, with her childlike face, pure, sea-shell complexion, and the blonde hair which she always wore hanging, in a long, heavy braid.

"I think it is perfect!" she said, after she had walked slowly round Miss Creighton. "There is nothing wanting! Those beautiful roses have added just the touch of bright color that was needed!"

"It was just like Mr. Hoffman to send them. He has such exquisite taste!" said Belle Creighton, gazing delightedly at her reflection in the mirror, — a tall, graceful figure, with folds of creamy satin and frost-like lace falling about it, a perfect face, dark eyes, both soft and bright, like a Spanish woman's, and warm-black hair, in which the deep red roses "blushed and burned."

"I don't think he has any better taste than Charley!" said Nan Creighton.

Nan was a school-girl, and was looking on with admiration at her sister's toilet, and wondering if her time would ever come.

Belle's lip curled slightly, and she tossed a bouquet into Nan's lap.

"You may have his bouquet, since you

admire his taste so much, — nothing but common flowers! I should n't think he ever took the slightest pains, or considered my complexion at all. But Mr. Hoffman" —

"Pardon me, — I take great liberty, — but what did you say the gentleman's name was?"

The little dressmaker's sea-shell pink cheeks had taken a deeper tint, and there was a startled look in her eyes.

"Hoffman. Carl Hoffman, the distinguished musician. You have heard of him, of course?"

"I hear but little of music, now, and it is a great grief to me," the girl said, shaking her head sadly. "But the name startled me. It is long since I have heard it. I once had a friend of that name, but he is dead."

"I am so sorry for you!" cried good-natured, impulsive Nan.

"Here, you shall have this bouquet. I don't care for flowers, unless I can wear them!"

"Thank you. I love flowers, and I seldom have any," said little Miss Meyer, wiping away a tear, and taking her leave with a grave courtesy.

"Miss Meyer, be sure you come with my green dinner-dress! Tell Madame Dumesnil I always want you to see my dresses after they are done, if they are only wraps! Your taste is so charming!"

"I will tell her," said Miss Meyer gravely.

"What a queer, grave little soul that is!" said Belle. "So different from the rest of Madame Dumesnil's flaunting, stylish shop-girls. I wish I could have her for a maid; she has twice as much taste as you, Lizette, with all your French airs!"

The ugly, high-nosed French woman dropped a courtesy, and said, with a laugh, but with a spiteful accent, —

"Mademoiselle is very good!"

"No, I am not very good," said Belle candidly. "If I were, I should take more interest in that girl, and try to find out what troubles her, and try to help her."

"And if you were good you would n't

treat Charley Forester so badly," said Nan, who was very fond of her future brother-in-law.

"What do I do to Charley?" said Miss Belle indifferently, while Lizette wrapped her in her opera cloak.

"You flirt outrageously! — that's what you do, and when he does n't like it — as I should like to know who would! — you say he is jealous, and threaten to break your engagement! If I had such a splendid, elegant, noble, true lover, as Charley Forester, I would be true to him!"

"Oh the wisdom and virtue of fifteen!" said Belle.

Mamma Creighton came in at that moment, stately in velvet and point-lace and diamonds.

"Now, Belle, I don't want to see any flirting tonight! Everybody is beginning to talk about you and Mr. Hoffman, and Charley is down-stairs, looking perfectly wretched. I know he dreads going anywhere with you. If you don't stop these performances you will be sorry!"

"Another variation on the same air!" said Belle, with a yawn. "Gay youth and hoary age both lift up their voice against me! No, mamma, you're not old! you look like a beauty tonight. But don't talk to me any more about flirting! If it is n't stupid enough to be engaged to one's third cousin, whom one has known all one's life, and played with when he wore knickerbockers, without being absolutely forbidden to look at another man! And am I to blame because they will follow me about? I should think it was bad enough to have Charley such a jealous idiot, without your taking his part! No: I am not going to break my engagement if Charley will behave himself; but if he is going to stick close to my side, everywhere I go, looking as if he contemplated immediate suicide, glowering at every man who speaks to me, I can't endure it, and I won't."

And Miss Belle sailed down-stairs, with her head very erect.

"O Nan, I hope you will never be the trouble to me that that child is!" said her mother, with a sigh. "I hope you'll never be so handsome!"

"I hope I shall be!" said Nan anxiously; "but I won't flirt, — at least after I'm engaged, — though I will flirt awfully before." (This last clause *sotto voce*.) "Anyway, if Charley had as much spunk as a man ought to have, he would n't bear it!"

"Charley," a blonde, handsome young man, but with a rather woe-begone expression, was pacing up and down the drawing-room when his betrothed came sailing in, in all her splendor.

His face brightened suddenly at sight of her.

"Belle, who was that girl that I met coming down-stairs as I came in?" he demanded, neglecting altogether his customary affectionate greeting.

"Now he is going to rave about his flowers!" thought Belle. "One of Madame Dumesnil's shop-girls, who brought my dress home," she responded indifferently.

"A shop-girl! She looks more like a princess! The loveliest face I ever saw! And so much grace and elegance about her too!"

Belle stared at him, in unaffected amazement.

Never, since he became her devoted slave, at the age of eight years, had she heard him express the slightest admiration for or interest in any young woman.

And not a word did he say about his flowers, though he must have seen them in Miss Meyer's hand.

"She is rather pretty," said Miss Belle indifferently.

"Rather pretty! Why, where are your eyes, Belle? She is a perfect beauty!"

"How do you like my dress?" asked Belle, changing the subject.

"Very much. Did she make it? I should know she had exquisite taste by her own get-up!"

"Get-up? What do you mean? She had on a black cashmere suit, made as plainly as it could possibly be!"

"Well, perhaps she did, but there was an air and style about her dress. By the way, Belle, what is the matter with you? It seems to me you are not looking quite so well as usual! Feeling a little fagged, are you?"

This was too much for Miss Belle, who was sure she had on the most becoming toilet she had ever worn in her life, and was looking more brilliantly beautiful than she had ever looked before! She turned her back upon him, and, fortunately, her mother appeared, and led the way to the carriages, at that moment.

What had "come over the spirit of his dream" was more than Belle could guess.

Could it have been that little Miss Meyer,

Madame Dumesnil's shop-girl? Belle had heard of love at first sight, and surely she was beautiful enough to turn any man's head.

But, then, Charley was in love with her, — dreadfully so, he had seemed to be. About seven times as much so as she wanted him to be, she had been wont to say. Could such things be?

Revolving this problem in her mind, Belle was unusually silent and *distracted*, all the way to Mrs. L——'s, where the *soiree dansante* was to be given. Charley, too, seemed lost in thought. As they got out of the carriage, Mrs. Creighton whispered in his ear, —

"She shall behave better tonight, or I'll take her home!"

"Don't! Let her go to the end of her chain! I'm on a new tack!" he whispered in return.

Once in the thronged, brilliantly lighted rooms, with the air heavy with perfume, and the band sending forth bewitching strains, Belle's spirits revived. If Charley wanted to fall in love with little, dress-making Miss Meyer, he might; she would show him that she did not care!

Mr. Hoffman was there. He was a distinguished musician, who had recently come to B——, and he was "all the rage." He was not considered "eligible," of course, being only a musician, but he was so handsome and *distingue*, and so elegant in his manner, that all the young ladies were bewitched with him. His hair was "touched with an untimely frost," and he had a melancholy air, which made him all the more interesting. He was quite devoted to Miss Belle Creighton, and it could not be denied that she encouraged his attentions.

"It is perfectly shameful, — the way Belle Creighton goes on with Mr. Hoffman!" remarked one young lady (who would have greatly preferred to monopolize Mr. Hoffman's attentions herself). "And it's about the fortieth flirtation she has had since she has been engaged to Mr. Forester! And he goes mooning about, looking as doleful as an owl, and not speaking to anybody!"

But Charley was not as "doleful" tonight as usual. To be sure he was not particularly devoted to the young ladies, but he did make himself agreeable to the dowagers, and he did not "stick to Belle's side" nor "look as if he contemplated immediate suicide."

Once, when they were dancing together, he said, carelessly, to Belle, —

"How beautiful your roses are!"

And Belle replied enthusiastically, —

"Are n't they exquisite? Mr. Hoffman sent them to me."

And instead of looking angry or despairing, he answered indifferently, —

"He has very good taste, then, — a fine fellow, every way, I think, and a real genius musically!"

Praise of Mr. Hoffman, now! Belle looked at him in silent amazement, and he seemed suddenly to think that he was going too far.

"But I don't think it looks very well for you to dance every other dance with him, Belle!" he said.

Belle saw that that speech was the result of an afterthought, and drew her own conclusions. He did not care, now, how much she flirted with Mr. Hoffman, but he did not wish to change his manner so suddenly that she should guess his secret. And he only said that it did not look very well; the looks used to be the last thing to trouble him!

Belle did not feel at all happy; her flirtation with Mr. Hoffman had begun to seem a flat, stale and unprofitable thing. But yet she was not going to wear the willow for any man. Charley should not see that she even noticed his indifference!

The next day came little Miss Meyer, with the green silk dinner-dress. Belle looked at her with a new interest. She certainly was beautiful enough to make a man forget his first love, she decided. The green silk dress was a very gorgeous affair, being trimmed with peacock feathers, and yellow, old lace. It was strikingly becoming, and Belle's vanity caused her spirits to rise to the highest pitch.

"I wonder if Charley would say I did not look as well as usual if he could see me now!" she thought. "Miss Meyer could not look like this!"

"Run down, and let Charley see you," suggested Nan, who was always present at her sister's toilets, when it was possible.

"How came Charley here, at this time of day?" she asked.

"He is here, talking with mamma, in the library," said Nan.

Belle threw her train over her arm, and ran down-stairs.

Charley and his future mother-in-law

seemed to be having an earnest *tete a tete*, which was suspended as soon as Belle appeared.

"'It was a beauteous lady richly drest,'" sang Charley. "That is uncommonly gorgeous, is n't it, Belle? But I am not quite sure that green is your color! Did that same little girl bring it home?" eagerly.

"Miss Meyer brought it home," said Belle stiffly.

"It is a beautiful overskirt," said Mrs. Creighton, who was inspecting the dress, critically.

"Of course I don't pretend to be a judge," said Charley, "but it seems to me that if it were looped a little higher on the left side it would look a great deal better."

"I don't know but it would," said Belle, with her mind wholly upon her dress. "I'll let Miss Meyer try it."

"Let her come down here and do it! I want to see the effect," said Charley coolly.

Belle drew herself up haughtily, and was about to sail out of the room, but a new idea struck her. Should she let this cool young man think she cared how much he admired a pretty shop-girl? — think that she was jealous of him? Perish the thought!

"Ring the bell, Charley, and I'll send for Miss Meyer," she said quietly.

Miss Meyer came, grave and quiet, as usual, and made the proposed change in the overskirt.

Charley expressed his approval enthusiastically, and Belle, being on the watch, caught him bestowing a very admiring glance upon the beautiful dressmaker. It was very doubtful whether little Miss Meyer had the benefit of it, however, for she scarcely looked up.

When she had gone Charley drew a long breath.

"That is the most exquisite creature I ever saw!" he exclaimed. "Do you suppose she could be induced to sit to an artist? Will Van Amsden would give his eyes for a chance to paint her!"

"I don't know. I never thought of trying to lead her out of her proper sphere, in any way. She has very good taste, and suits me as a dressmaker, and that is all I know about her," said Belle icily.

"I think you and Will Van Amsden had better not meddle with a pretty dressmaker," said his future mother-in-law. "You would only turn her head with your flatteries!"

"But such beauty as that ought not to blush unseen! now you know it ought not! Why, I don't believe there's a woman in the United States who can hold a candle to her! And she has such a lovely expression, — such a sweet, appealing look in her eyes" —

Belle went out, and banged the door, at that moment.

Could it be possible that a faint cackle of laughter sounded in her ears as she ran up-stairs? She thought not, for surely her mother would not stoop to laughter with that graceless fellow! She was vexed with herself for showing that she was angry, and resolved that it should be the last time she would give him that satisfaction.

She went up-stairs, and sent Nan out of her room, was cross to Lizette, and snubbed little Miss Meyer and dismissed her. She resolved to punish her lover by not making her appearance again that night, not suspecting for a moment that he meant to go away before dinner. But shortly after the door closed upon little Miss Meyer she heard it close again, and, looking out of the window, beheld Charley, following closely in Miss Meyer's footsteps.

The dressmaker crossed the street, and Charley crossed also.

The sidewalk was icy, and little Miss Meyer slipped and fell.

Charley picked her up.

"Just the chance he wanted! and the artful little minx probably did it on purpose!" thought Miss Belle, in her anger. But, on purpose or not, Miss Meyer had evidently sprained her ankle. She tried in vain to stand.

"A very interesting situation!" thought the unsympathetic Belle.

She saw Charley point to the house, as if suggesting that she should be carried there. But Miss Meyer shook her head decidedly. Then Charley hailed a passing carriage, put her into it, and, O climax of honors! got into it himself also.

"*Mais ciel!* he is the true gentleman!" said Lizette, who was also looking out of the window. "As polite to the poor little modiste as if she were a lady! And truly she could not get out of the carriage alone, if her ankle is sprained, or broken, as it seems."

"I'll break my engagement!" resolved Belle. "I've threatened it often enough, when I did n't mean it, but now I will do

it. This is a great deal more than his being jealous!"

In the mean time Charley was divided between sympathy for poor little Miss Meyer's sufferings, and gratitude for the accident which had given him an opportunity of making her acquaintance.

He accompanied her home, and made himself as agreeable as possible to the motherly old German woman with whom she boarded. Little Miss Meyer's shy gratitude to him was very pretty to see, but he staid only long enough to obtain permission to call again, when she was better, and hurried in search of a physician to send to her.

Then he hastily despatched a messenger with a note to Mrs. Creighton, directing it carelessly, so that it looked as much like Miss as Mrs., and, O artful Charley! directing the messenger to say it was for Miss Creighton.

Charley's handwriting was well known to the small page who attended the door at the Creighton mansion, and the note found its way at once into Belle's hands. She opened it and read, —

"DEAR MRS. CREIGHTON, — *Fate has favored me, and I have made the acquaintance of the lovely little dressmaker, and I think I am right. I felt so strongly attracted to her the first moment that I saw her! I know you will be my friend in this, but how shall we break it to Belle, who, I am afraid, cares more than he deserves for a man who can, at most, give her only a divided heart! Think as kindly as you can of one who once hoped to be your son.*

"CHARLES FORESTER."

Poor Belle sank down on the floor, not quite fainting, but feeling that her life or all that made life worth having had suddenly come to an end. Charley loved her no longer! Her mother was to help him break the news to her! This was so much more dreadful than her wildest fancy! And how cool he was about it!

But then her conscience whispered to her that in the three years that their engagement had lasted, she had sometimes been decidedly "cool" in declaring to him that she would flirt with whomsoever she liked; that she never would marry him, and that she did not "care a bit" for him! Poor Belle! she knew, now, whether that last statement was true or not. Oh, how much

dearer to her was one hair of his head, than Mr. Hoffman, or the dozens of other men, whose attentions and flatteries she had received and encouraged!

But she had fairly worn his love out, and the natural result had come! She had only herself to blame. But nobody should know she cared; her pride should sustain her even when they "broke the news" to her!

She re-sealed the letter carefully, and sent it to her mother, and no comment upon it passed between them.

A week passed, and she did not see Charley. Another week, and he only wrote her a cold and careless note, saying that he was "very busy."

Then, one day, at the breakfast-table, her mother began, with the air of one who has a weighty matter on her mind, —

"Belle, I have something to tell you."

Belle, who had grown visibly paler and thinner in these last two weeks, nerved herself for the coming blow.

"Charley has discovered that Miss Meyer is much above her station!"

"Indeed!" ejaculated Belle, unable, with all her pain, to resist a touch of sarcasm.

"She has a lovely voice, which has been very carefully cultivated. I went to see her, yesterday, and heard her sing. She is anxious to find pupils, and I am confident that she can. I am going to give a little musicale, on Thursday evening, and she is going to sing. She has a very sad story, poor child. She came over from Germany to meet her lover, and found that he was dead. She was detained after she had secured passage on a vessel, by a long illness, and the vessel on which she was to have sailed was lost, with all the passengers, so that her lover, before he died, supposed her to be dead. She was homeless and friendless here, and had no resource but her needle."

"She has found friends, now," said Belle coldly.

"Why, Belle, I am ashamed of you, not to show more interest in this poor girl! It is not at all like you!"

"With such devoted friends she does n't need my poor assistance," said Belle, and rushed out of the room, to hide a burst of tears.

Pride led her to don her bravest attire, and her brightest smiles, on the evening of her mother's little musicale; led her also to greet Charley with an assumption of gay in-

difference,—which, unfortunately, did not accord well with her altered looks.

It was a small and select assemblage which Mrs. Creighton had gathered together, for the purpose of displaying her *protegee's* talent.

Mr. Hoffman was there, handsome and melancholy as ever. Little Miss Meyer came in, and took her place at once at the piano.

Mr. Hoffman volunteered to play her accompaniment. As he drew near she turned as white as a lily, and stretched her hands out toward him, crying,—

“Franz! O my Franz!” and fell fainting into his arms.

“Lena! my little Lena! has the sea given up its dead?” he cried.

Miss Meyer did not sing that night.

Charley drew Belle away into a quiet corner as soon as possible.

“I knew just how it was going to turn out, and I wanted to tell you before, but your mother thought it was better not. You don’t look down-hearted, Belle, but I was afraid,—really a little afraid,—that you cared for Hoffman!”

Belle drew herself up haughtily, but a little smile stole around the corners of her mouth.

“I should think you were the one to look down-hearted!” said she.

“About Miss Meyer? Oh, that is my little joke! Were you really a little bit jealous, Belle? Then I have n’t lived in vain! You see the way of it was this. Hoffman and I were better friends than you knew. He told me his story one day; I

think partly because he knew I was jealous of him, and he wanted to assure me that I need n’t be. When he first came to this country, and for a long time afterward, he was very poor. At last he scraped together money enough to send for his sweetheart, but the vessel on which he supposed she sailed was lost, with all the passengers. Then he left the city where he lived, and came here, and having good luck he dropped his own Christian name, Franz, not wishing to be known as the poverty-stricken fiddler who had only played for balls and parties. He showed me his sweetheart’s picture, and told me his heart was buried with her, and he should never care for any other woman. The moment I saw Miss Meyer on the stairs, that day, I knew she was the original of that picture! I saw that you did not like my being interested in her! ah, Belle, I believe I should have lost heart, entirely, if it had not been for that sign that my darling did care a little for me! and I determined to try you a little in that way, while I was finding out whether she was Hoffman’s sweetheart. Your mother planned the denouement. She thought we might be mistaken, and it was better not to raise false hopes in them. It seems that Hoffman had disappeared so sudden from his few friends that they thought him dead, and told Miss Meyer so. Now, Belle, I want to know if it is true that without the existence of love there can be no jealousy?”

“O Charley, I have been so wretched!” murmured Belle, with her head on his shoulder. “And you see if I ever flirt again!”

BILLY JONES'S ADVENTURE.

BY MRS. A. H. HOUK.

Billy Jones woke up one bright spring morning with a vague uncomfortable feeling that something unpleasant had happened, and, by the time his eyes were fully opened, he remembered the cause of his discomfort. The image of his teacher rose before him, and the awful words sounded again in his ears, —

"William Jones, if your geography lesson is not perfect tomorrow, I shall give you a severe whipping."

Billy also made a discovery as he was slowly dressing himself, which was this: He had a sore throat, — yes, — he was sure he had a very sore throat, and that malady increased to such a degree that he declared, when he made his appearance at the breakfast table, that his "throat hurt him awful," and of course he could n't think of going to school. It must be acknowledged that Billy ate a very hearty breakfast for a boy with an "awful sore throat."

He laid down on the settee, and heard with solemn satisfaction the school-bell ring, but really it was very hard for him to lie still until the second bell rang for school to commence, which was a long interval of fifteen minutes. After nine o'clock Billy became aware of a remarkable fact, and that was, he was rapidly growing better. Had he been an older boy he would not

have been so much surprised at this phenomenon. Older people are often much surprised to find when they reach the dentist's door that the aching tooth is better, if not quite well.

An hour and a half dragged slowly along, and when Billy heard the recess bell ring he felt that he could not stay in the house another moment, — his mother was not in the room to object, — so he got his hat and walked out in the yard. Here was a pretty predicament for a boy to be in, who had not a pain or an ache in the world. It was a sultry day, and Billy's throat was done up in a red flannel bandage. How hot he felt! and how he longed for a lunch of raw turnips or parched corn, or some other indigestible horror so highly relished by the average school-boy! How he wished to join his comrades in the game of ball! he could hear their shouts in the distance, and sadly he remembered of a little difficulty between himself and Bobby Kerr, which he had promised that individual to settle that recess in the alley back of the school-house. Bobby would be sure to misconstrue his absence from school, especially if he appeared the next day without the red-flannel bandage on his throat. He grew hotter than ever at the dreadful thought. By and by he wandered to the garden, and began an

operation which he had repeated every day since he had planted his sweet peas, — this was to dig them up to see if they had sprouted. It was a little satisfaction to him in his melancholy mood to find that three or four showed signs of germination. Then he visited his quail trap that had been set for weeks in a corner of the yard. Billy had never seen a quail in the yard upon any occasion, but he had traded with Bobby Kerr for the trap, giving two fish-hooks, a knife with three broken blades, and a kite, which, owing to its faulty construction, had never been made to fly; and Billy felt that unless he should some time find a quail in the trap, the trade, as far as he was concerned, was a bad one. Bobby likewise cherished similar views concerning his part of the transaction, and after breaking his fish-hooks and becoming disgusted at his many futile attempts to fly the kite he gave utterance to the opinion that he had been cheated in the trade, and the unpleasantness which was to have been settled at this particular recess was relative to this transaction.

Billy walked slowly back to the house, wondering what to do next. Finally he thought of his money box, which he brought out to the wood-pile, and began counting his pennies. Billy's father gave him a penny every time he was at the head of any of his classes, which, alas! was so seldom that he forgot from time to time the amount of his hoard, and upon several occasions he had expressed to his mother his belief that the house had been entered by burglars and part of his pennies stolen by them, and although he was still firmly convinced of the truth of his theory he now seldom ventured to express it on account of the storm of ridicule it called forth. There were eleven pennies, — enough to make considerable noise when Billy shook the box hard, but not enough to buy a large Newfoundland dog that his owner asked three dollars for. Billy had resolved successively to buy a dog, a double-barreled shot-gun, and a pair of skates, and a four-bladed knife. He recounted the eleven pennies, and sadly abandoned, one after the other, the hope of possessing the dog, gun or skates, — perhaps the four-bladed knife could be bought for eleven pennies, he ignorantly thought; at any rate it would n't take but a few moments to climb over the back fence and run up to the hardware store and see. He did

so, and found to his sorrow that the price of the cheapest four-bladed knives was a dollar, and Billy replaced the pennies in the box, dismayed at the prospect of his continued toilsome progress up the hill of knowledge whereon the milestones of pennies were so few and far between. Soon Billy's natural hopefulness asserted itself, and he invested five of his eleven pennies in fish-hooks, and soon resumed his perch on the wood-pile. Before long he became so uncomfortable in the sun that he descended, and in so doing he kicked aside a stick, and disclosed five or six fish-worms. What mortal boy could withstand the sight of fish-worms when he had new fish-hooks in his pocket? That mythical youth was not Billy; and so he began preparing his fishing tackle for an afternoon's fishing excursion.

His health began declining rapidly after dinner, and he resumed his position on the settee until after school had begun, but after that hour a small boy might have been seen climbing with difficulty over the back fence encumbered with a fishing-pole and an old oyster-can filled with earth and fish-worms. There had been a long season of rainy weather, and there was prospect of a freshet. The river was muddy, and logs, fence rails, and drift of various kinds were floating near the banks. Billy knew by these signs that the river was still rising. The old sycamore log on which he usually took position when he fished was partially submerged; but one end projected over the water, and he concluded to be more adventurous than usual, and take this place, when another glance showed him it was already occupied by Pompey Goggins, a somewhat disreputable colored acquaintance of Billy's. He hardly knew whether to be glad or sorry at the sight of Pompey. It was lone some fishing alone, he knew by experience; but he also knew that his mother had positively forbidden any further association with Pompey ever since a memorable occasion, when Billy had made his appearance at the paternal mansion with his clothing dirty and torn, his right eye swollen, almost shut, and his nose bleeding, — these injuries having been inflicted by the aforesaid Pompey. However, Pompey was something of a hero in Billy's eyes, for he was the owner of an old army rifle, and Pompey could smoke a real cigar and not get sick from the indulgence.

Billy soon took his place by Pompey's side, and began conversation.

"Got any bass yet?" inquired Billy.

"Bass!" exclaimed Pompey, in tones of contempt: "ye mus' be green ter think bass 'ud bite in dish 'ere rily water."

"Then what you fishing for?" inquired Billy.

"Wy, fer cats," lucidly explained Pompey.

Billy baited his hook, and waited a few moments before he ventured timidly to inquire what Pompey meant by saying he was fishing for cats.

"Cat-fish, chile," curtly replied Pompey.

It was plain to Billy's mind that Pompey had not yet buried the figurative hatchet, but he prudently restrained his impulse to push him off the log into the water, for he knew Pompey was older and much stronger than he. Billy was fortunate in so doing, for Pompey was calling to mind the number of times when Billy, being safe in the companionship of his comrades, had cowardly hurled opprobrious epithets at him, reflecting his color and condition.

The boys fished in silence for some time, when Billy felt something tugging at his line. He hoped to discomfit his companion by hauling up a fine bass, and hurriedly and excitedly shouted, "Look, Pompey!" and Pompey turned his head to see Billy draw up a dead limb that had caught in his hook. Pompey broke out into an ecstasy of derisive laughter. This was too much for Billy in addition to his disappointment. He dropped his pole, and clinched Pompey, when he suddenly became aware that the sycamore log was moving, and Pompey, making the same discovery, attributed Billy's demonstrations to his fright.

The log slowly swayed around, and moved swifter and swifter as it entered the current. The boys shouted for help, but all the noise they could make was drowned by the roar of the fast-rising river. There were no houses near, and the river at this point ran through a forest, and the boys felt the prospect for rescue was very faint, and after shouting themselves hoarse they settled into the apathy of despair. The current soon grew stronger, and it was all they could do to keep their balance. The log surged and swayed so that many times they nearly fell into the boiling flood. Finally the river grew broader and smoother, and as it was

not hard work to keep their seats Billy began to speculate as to their probable fate. He wondered where the river emptied itself. He had no clear idea, and concluded to question Pompey.

"Pomp," he inquired, "did you ever go to school?"

"Yes," replied Pompey, "went mos' two weeks las' spring."

"Did you ever study geography?" continued Billy.

"Geography? what 's that?"

"Why," explained Billy, "that book that tells all about rivers and things."

"No," slowly responded Pompey, "don't guess I ever did."

After a brief silence Billy inquired, —

"Do you think this river flows into Lake Erie?"

"Yes," said Pompey, after some deliberation, "guess it done goes inter Erie."

Then the river made a turn running directly south, and poor Billy, after taxing his brains for some time, concluded the river did not run into Lake Erie, so he ventured upon another conjecture.

"Pomp," said he, "don't you believe this river runs into the Mississippi?"

"Yes," said Pompey, "guess it done goes inter the Missip."

"When do you think we'll get there, Pomp?"

"Don't guess 'fore sun-up," said Pompey.

All this information accorded with Billy's own ideas, and he lapsed into silence. He pictured the consternation that reigned at home, — he fancied he saw his father and the neighbors dragging the river, and finally bringing up his cold and lifeless remains. He saw his mother weeping over them, and lamenting she had ever insisted upon his going to school, and had refused to give him all the mince-pies and doughnuts he wanted. Sometimes the picture was bright, and he imagined himself rescued and lionized and elevated into the dignity of a hero by the family and neighbors.

Billy's speculations were interrupted by noticing the log on which they were floating seemed to be getting nearer the shore, and finally it entered a cove, in which a mass of drift had lodged, and Billy and Pompey made their way to the shore without much difficulty, and gladly turned their faces homeward. It seemed to them that they had been afloat for hours, and yet they

reached the town in time to encounter the crowd of home-bound school-boys, and among them Billy's enemy, Bobby Kerr, who was not slow to interpret Billy's absence from school into an admission of cowardice. His jeers and taunts were hard to bear, especially as Billy saw Bobby's opinion was shared by the rest of the school-

boys, and Billy hurried home through the alley.

The small boy who went supperless to bed that night, and smarting from a severe switching, realized to the fullest extent that he was not a hero, but a bad little boy who did not want to go to school because he was too lazy to get his lessons.

BLACK HULDAH'S PROPHECY.

BY JOHN A. PETERS.

A large, rambling, yellow farm-house, half buried in a wealth of gnarled apple-trees and struggling lilac-bushes; one of the oldest places for miles and miles around, and owned by one Nathan Lambert, the richest, most influential farmer in the county. Broad meadows rolled away in the distance, diversified by silver streamlets and belts of forest-land, all the property of this one man, a cheery, good-natured fellow with a big heart, and a genial manner toward all with whom he came in contact. His one great sorrow was that he had no son to heir this lordly domain, — only a slim, brown-haired fairy of a daughter, with eyes like those of a hunted gazelle, whom he almost worshiped, but, after all, poor man! was not a boy, — one who could bear his name and cultivate the rich soil, and look out that the property, which he had by his prudence and labor accumulated, should not go out of the family. His wife was a fragile, timid little woman, who barely reached the shoulder of her lord and spouse by standing on tip-toe, — such a woman as these big, pompous men invariably marry, — without an original idea, yet kind-hearted withal, who believed that the sun rose and set with her husband. 'T was a delicious May morning on which our story opens. *All Nature* was at her loveliest. Over the earth rested the warm blue heavens, the luminary, like a wheel of fire, dispensing sufficient heat to satisfy the critical mortals who inhabit this mundane sphere; the trees were clothed in becoming emerald robes; the long, waving grass rose and fell like the green billows of a sea; showers of pink and white snow eddied down from the forest of apple-trees; while the lilacs tossed in the air their purple plumes, and the bees buzzed as they gathered sweets from every hand, the insects chirped, and birds sang. Such a delightful morning! and little Janet Lambert clapped her hands in glee as she came out on the long stoop, or veranda, as she termed it, since her return from a fashionable New-York school, over which the starry lilacs nodded, some flour adhering to the plump, brown arms, for she had been

busy preparing dainties to tempt the appetite of the city cousin, who was to make her advent at the farm-house that day.

"Papa!" she called to the big-featured, ruddy-faced man bending over an onion-bed in the garden beyond, "*is n't it time that Will went to the depot after Salome?* It is a long ride, and I'm afraid she will have to wait, which will not be at all pleasant."

"Plenty of time, Janie, don't worry," the farmer complacently replied, after consulting his watch. "But Will might as well get ready. Are you going too?"

"I believe not. I should like to go, in order to appear hospitably inclined, but there are so many things to attend to, and mother is not feeling well, and Mary Ann is so awkward. I rather dread Salome's coming, however. They support such style in her home, and she is said to be such a beauty and belle, living in a world of excitement of her own, that I'm afraid she will find this country place wonderfully dull and effete."

"Nonsense, girlie! 'T will be an agreeable change to her, if she is coming to recruit as she wrote; and, even so, who cares? we'll do the best we can to make time pass swiftly, and if we fail, why — why, let her go home then. So don't trouble yourself in the least. Will!" crying out to a young fellow, indefatigably touching up a long row of currant-bushes with lime-water to destroy the insects eating up the leaves, "you had better harness and go down to H — after our guest."

"Very well, sir. Are n't you going too, Miss Janet?" addressing the daughter of the man he worked for, half concealed under the swaying lilac blooms.

"I guess not, Will," glancing up shyly in the tall fellow's face, for, be it known, this little girl of the richest land-owner in the township had a decided *penchant* for her father's hired man. And no wonder. Willard Rossmere was as fine-looking a man as one would care to meet. Such a tall, compact, graceful figure as he had; such a handsome, intellectual, good-natured face, well tanned by the sun and wind, with a

pair of fearless brown eyes, and a luxuriance of close-cropped brown curls, covering the nobly shaped head rising up from the broad shoulders. He wore a suit of coarse gray stuff, but in it he looked a brown Apollo; on his head was a wide, brown straw hat, lending a picturesque appearance to the face it shrouded. He hurried away to perform his master's bidding, and was soon riding along the road behind a pair of dashing, fast-stepping blacks. 'T was a good eight-miles' ride, over a much-traveled road, but Will bestowed but little attention to the scenery; he seemed to be revolving some momentous question in his mind, oblivious of the smiling sun, the green fields, and the thousand-and-one objects of interest he was passing. As he neared the depot the train glided in and disembogued its freight of suffering humanity. A lady attired in soft gray, closely veiled, alighted with the rest. Willard Rossmere tied the horses and stepped on the platform. His glance encountered the gray-robed, gray-veiled lady. She was in the act of tossing the veil aside, revealing a face at which Willard marveled. It was so fatally fair, albeit a perfectly colorless one. Did never a bit of red rob it of its marble pallor? he thought. A few rings of palest gold strayed out from under her hat over the white forehead; the eyes looking about her so indifferently were of the darkest possible blue, fringed in by sweeping jet lashes, making it unique enough to have pleased Baron Verulam. The nose, daintily cut, might have befitted Donetti's "Circassian." In all his life Willard Rossmere had never beheld, much less expected to see, such a face. In spite of its pallor and the weariness overshadowing it, 't was superb. But, and he read the truth without hesitation, she was haughtiness personified. She was of the medium height, slender, and graceful as a peerless white lily. Who was she? Not an inkling of the truth that this was Salome Roberts, niece of the man he was working for, entered his head. He only thought, —

"She will soon go one way, I another. The tantalizing glimpse I have caught of her has served to render my monotonous life distasteful. The hired man's heart has gone out of his keeping, absurd as it is to make the confession. Well-a-day! she is as far out of my reach as yonder golden sun!"

He turned to go in quest of the expected

guest, when the gray-robed figure quietly approached him, and unconsciously he halted to see what it had to say.

"Pardon me, sir, but I am expecting a Mr. Lambert here after me. Might I trouble you to inquire if he is come?"

The voice was low and refined, — exactly the voice that ought to belong to such a woman.

The rich color came into the man's tanned face. This, then, was the expected guest? And he — ah! he was only a hired man. He hastened to explain, —

"If you are Miss Roberts, I am come to fetch you."

"Indeed!" with a slow, gracious smile, "I was expecting uncle himself."

"He was busy, so substituted me instead. I am his hired man."

He uttered the words carelessly, hard as the effort was, for he realized what they meant to one in Miss Roberts's station of life, — an uncouth, illiterate creature, scarcely belonging to the same species of creation as herself.

A gleam of surprise crept into the dark blue eyes. His *physique* was so magnificent, his tone so deep and rich. But she vouchsafed no reply save, —

"If you will see to my baggage, I should like to start at once. I am very tired, having ridden all night."

With a bow he set about performing her bidding, leaving her in a sort of trance.

"I wonder if such men as he are common in this vicinity. Only a hired man! He has the air of a grand seignor."

Then she stood musingly, with glance bent on the misty blue hills, till a manly voice near her said, —

"The carriage is waiting to convey you to your destination."

He assisted her in and drove away. A black, portentous cloud swept over the sun. Was it ominous of evil? He shivered a bit, the morning had been so bright and sunny, with never a fleck in the blue of the sky when he started. She sat cool and perfectly unmoved, apparently not given to superstition. He pointed to the darkening cloud obscuring the brightness of the God of Day.

"It forbodes mischief, Miss Roberta. See! And a host of clouds, not sober '*grææ*' either, are gliding in from all the ports conceivable above. We shall have a thunder-storm."

The observation evidently did not inter-

est her, for she sat still as a statue, her fair face turned eastward. He touched the horses with the whip, and away they sped, the clouds in the heavens growing larger and darker the while. Four miles they had gone over when the rain came down, and not a habitation in sight save a tumble-down old building in the woods, occupied but a short time ago by a negro seeress. He turned off in the path in the woods leading to it.

"There is no help for it, Miss Roberts. You must alight and seek shelter in that miserable hut, or else get drenched to the skin."

She took in the situation at once, and being a sensible girl in most things, let him assist her out. No time to move languidly now. She gathered up her drapery, and darted through the open door of the hut, just as a deluge of glittering rain-drops dashed down. He attended to the horses, then followed suit, bearing in his hand a fanciful lap-robe for her to sit on. The hut was so low that he could not stand upright in it; a single window, with the glass broken out, looked out upon a deep gully, down which a fretted stream of water fell and babbled an eery tune. Poisonous weeds grew rank and high above it. A rude, three-legged stool was in one darkened corner, the only piece of furniture the room contained. The door was swinging on its hinges, and could be but partially closed. Miss Roberts sank wearily on the three-legged stool, over which he placed the lap-robe, drawing the mantilla closely about her shoulders. Rossmere stationed himself at the broken window, through which the rain dashed, and furtively scanned the blackened heavens; then his gaze wandered to the quiet girl on the low stool, whose slender, gloved hands were tightly clenched, whose gray drapery fell billowy fashion about her feet. Of what was she dreaming? Her eyes had in them such a far-away look, as if dwelling upon something happening in the past, and not of an agreeable nature, judging of the shadows resting on her face. She took off her hat, and the breeze played with the golden hair falling about her brow.

"And her face is lily clear,
Lily-shaped and dropped in duty,
To the law of its own beauty.
And a forehead fair and saintly,

Which two blue eyes undershine
Like meek prayers before a shrine."

These words came into Willard's mind. True, he thought, when in repose; how if— A low, rumbling sound of thunder broke through the heavens, exploded about the hut. He stepped toward her, his figure bent.

"Are you afraid of thunder and lightning, Miss Roberts? We are to have a terrible storm. 'Tis almost as dark as night,—as if a pall of mourning shrouded the earth. 'Tis unfortunate that we started as we did."

She started up from her seat and began slowly to pace the narrow room, twirling her hat in her hand.

"It does not matter particularly. In fact, I rather like it. I was never in a forest in a storm before, and it has all the charm of novelty. How the rain pours down! If we were living in olden times I should fear another flood. But how happens it, Mr.—Mr."—

She stopped, with her gaze bent upon him inquiringly.

"Rossmere," supplying the information desired.

"How happens it, Mr. Rossmere, that this apology of a building is here?"

"It was tenanted by a black seeress not long since, of whom most fabulous stories are related. Black Huldah, she was called. The mass of people believed that she had the power to peer into futurity and discover what fate had in store for mortal man,—good or evil. All skeptical ones, seeking her, went away convinced of her necromantic powers. She was a weird, repulsive creature, whom I never consulted, not being at all tinged with superstition. Where she came from no one could find out; she disappeared as suddenly as she came, no one the wiser as to her nationality or whereabouts."

"Indeed!" a bit interested in what he was saying, and forgetting that it was her uncle's hired man she was addressing, and not one of her gentleman acquaintance. "I wonder if she has not left some evidence of her power to unravel the tangled skein of one's destiny."

"I doubt it, Miss Roberts."

"I am going to search anyhow. Help me, please, Mr. Rossmere."

They groped about the small room unusu-

cessfully. A heavy gust of wind assailed the hut, spent itself, and died away in the distance. A piece of parchment fluttered down from above the window. Salome Roberts picked it up curiously. "I've found a clew now, Mr. Rossmere. Be prepared to hear some important secret revealed."

Over the surface of the parchment was a queer tracery of letters, made with the purple juice of the poke-berry. 'T was in Latin. A wave of crimson swept over and warmed the cold cheek of the girl as she read. She spurned it from her as if it were a worm.

"I'm all impatience, mademoiselle. Disclose."

The crimson still burned in her cheek, as she said icily, —

"There is the parchment. You are at liberty to interpret if you can. 'T is in Latin."

He picked it up in the most *nonchalant* manner possible, and in no wise discomposd by her look or tone read the following lines.

"I'm about to depart for foreign lands; my work here is finished; but ere I go one more deed of wonder will I accomplish. 'T is this: To foretell the fate of two mortals who shall visit at some future time, in wind and rain, this hut. 'How do I know?' you inquire. Mortal, ask me not. It comes to me, this knowledge, as the rain to the wilted flowers, to the parched earth; it is sent to me by—no matter whom. Read, and be convinced, for however diametrically opposed are the two beings, however different in life their positions, these two, no matter how turbulent the course of their love, shall be—ay, as truly as they shall both meet and love—husband and wife."

"Well, Miss Roberts, what is your opinion of the prophecy so hieroglyphically traced on the parchment? Is it infallible, or liable to prove like some of Cassandra's, —of no account?"

What an insolent, presumptuous fellow he was! She arched her head defiantly as her ocean-tinted eyes met his.

"I think that the prophecy, as you are pleased to term it, is nothing more nor less than the fantastical croaking of a crazed woman, and will not bear discussion. If her hand produced those cabalistic words,

she is doubtless learned in classic lore: her Ethiopian face, the cunning she was possessed of, together with the mystery she mantled herself in, accomplished the rest. It does not belong to mortal man to unveil the future; 't is effectually screened from all eyes below. Of course she was aware that curiosity would bring to her domicile (a wretched hovel, is n't it?) people of all sorts. What more natural than a young couple, having a predilection for each other, should come together to glean a few grains of truth from the worthless chaff flung forth? Probably many have done so, and yet not happened to discover this parchment. The wind was the cause of our finding it. My version is that it is the effort of some inventive mind, bent on playing a joke upon some foolish couple."

She gave a little toss to her head, and a heavy curl of pallid gold escaped from its fastening and floated like a wandering sunbeam over her shoulder; her gloved hands began idly playing with it; while the sea-blue eyes were fastened with a cool, arrogant glance upon the young man, who had doffed his hat and thrown himself supinely on the floor. As she relapsed into silence, he coolly said, —

"You differ from me most materially. Black Huldah is conversant with several languages, living and dead; from no other brain than hers emanated the prophetic lines. I believe them, whoever they are intended for. Strange that we should be the first to find them."

She turned upon him, her face faultlessly calm and passionless, save for the curve of contempt about the lips, marring their faultless beauty. His tone irritated so much; she must put down this audacity at once, although she scorned herself to think that she should argue, much less get angry, with a hired man. He had the careless, *sans-souci* manner that gentlemen of position oft-times affected; he had interpreted without trouble the Latin into English; an unquestionably handsome man, with a certain air of boldness about him fascinating and uncommon in a delver of the soil. Reared as she was in the lap of luxury, with cultivated, æsthetic tastes, and used to homage not only from men of the coxcombical stamp, but from grave, intellectual *savants*, skilled in metaphysics, theology and art, there was something about this cool, audacious hired man of her uncle's, caring little

apparently whether he pleased or displeased, that roused the passion of Judge Roberts's daughter. She was thoroughly a woman of the world, yet not given to flirtation, despite the homage she exacted and received; she had schooled herself to appear careless and unconcerned at the most trying of times, to mask her true feelings so that they should not be visible on that patrician face of hers; but she felt now as if she would like to box his ears with her slender hand.

"Mr. Rossmere," she said frigidly, "you are presuming, — impertinent. There can be nothing in common with the daughter of Judge Roberts and her uncle's hired man. Black Huldah's prophecy will not come to pass."

He was beating a tattoo with his foot on the floor; outside the wind was lashing the hut, the rain falling and creating a musical tintinnabulation on the roof. He stretched out his limbs lazily, and smiled, — a sarcastic, sluggish smile, that made the blood within her boil, and made her for the moment think she hated him. Coolly he proceeded to smooth out the crumpled parchment on his knee.

"Judge Roberts's daughter prides herself *too much* on her charms and her father's money, and Nathan Lambert's hired man does not aspire; so it is hardly probable that Black Huldah's prophecy will come to pass."

He tossed the parchment to the floor, and started up from his recumbent posture.

Judge Roberts's daughter tied on her hat, and rose also.

"I should like to resume the journey at once. I would rather be drenched to the skin — ay, wholly submerged in the falling rain — than remain any longer than absolutely necessary in your detestable presence."

He did not stir; did not pay any attention to her desire.

"Will you get the horses, Mr. Rossmere, and start for uncle's?"

"Entirely out of the question, Miss Roberts. I should be delighted to obey; but 't would be hazardous in the extreme to start out in such a severe storm. Ugh! what a blinding flash! Besides, I'm not an aquatic animal; have so much antipathy to water that I would not be immersed to please so good a man as John the Baptist. You are something of an amphibian perhaps, Miss Roberts?"

"Then you will not go? You are a — coward."

"In this instance, yes. Have you no desire to explore the room further, Miss Roberts? It may contain more enigmas."

"Thanks. You are as unsolvable an enigma as the Sphinx's, propounded by *Cedipus*. If I was acquainted with the way, I should go immediately. I shall inform my uncle of your impudence, and see that he discharges you."

"Ha, ha, ha!" His laugh rang out clear and loud above the sobbing wind and distant rumbling of thunder. "He will not heed your counsel. I am too valuable a farm-hand for him to dispense with."

She averted her head, biting her lips in undisguised vexation.

"You need not address me again till you are ready to go."

"Very well."

A silence fell between them, both vexed at each other, — he at her pride, which styled a man who worked for his living inferior to one who did not; she at her condescension in noticing him in the least.

After all, she doubted his veracity when he said he was her uncle's hired man: he was playing upon her credulity, and was a guest or neighbor of her uncle's. *In fact*, he was not like a countryman one bit. His clothes were coarse, to be sure; but they were fashionably cut, and fitted his strong figure to perfection. His face was very much tanned; but he had likely been out hunting and fishing, and indulging in the out-door sports men are so fond of. His hand, so handsome and shapely, was not the hand of a man who had performed much manual labor, albeit it was a brown and strengthful one. Critically she surveyed the languid figure of the man, so conscious of her gaze, who never stirred nor minded a particle the surveillance he was under. Forgetting that she had admonished him not to address her, she was vexed that he took no notice of her. He had probably been surfeited with adulation, and was tired of womankind. But was she not a bit different from the majority of women? His indifference provoked her. She almost hoped Black Huldah's prophecy might come to pass if — Goodness! had he dared to fall asleep in her presence?

"Mr. Rossmere?" she called.

"Yes?" he said, lifting his eyes interrogatively.

"Why don't you talk? Pray say something to break the silence. You are as still as if you were one of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus. I am terribly *ennuye*. Tell me about my uncle's family. What sort of a girl is my Cousin Janet?"

"But you expressly forbade me to address you till I was ready to go."

"Yes; but that was before I was convinced that you are not my uncle's hired man."

"What has caused you to think I am not what I said?"

"Then you acknowledge that you told me a falsehood?"

"No: I do not. But you have n't answered my question."

His persistence pleased her.

"Well, then, I have been in society too long, and met with too many men, not to know a gentleman when I see him. Farm-hands do not read Latin; do not" —

"What?" he asked, as she stopped suddenly.

"No matter. But one decision I do not reconsider."

"And that is" —

"That you are insufferably insolent."

"I am sorry you deem me so, Miss Roberts; for it is farthest from my intention to be so. But you are so prejudiced against the poorer working class, that the opinions you have formed are erroneous in the extreme. Do you think a man an inferior being simply because he has less of 'the root of evil' than the class to which you belong, and has to work with his hands to acquire a livelihood? Is it not far manlier to perform honest labor than to resort to many of the tricks that some of the *beau monde* do in order to live in idleness, and keep up appearances? A farm-hand, providing he have the attributes of a man, the God-fearing qualities of one, is as much of a gentleman as he in whose veins the blue blood of kings runs. I have seen proud ladies, who would not deign even a glance to a working-man, associate with men too despicable to live; who were libertines, who were drunkards, who were — But why enumerate their faults? If they had been poor, society would have frowned them down, thrust them outside the aristocratic pale."

"To a certain degree, I'll admit. But you must confess that men performing manual labor are almost invariably illiterate and narrow-minded."

"Nay: I'll admit nothing of the kind. They have not the advantages of the rich, — the major part of their time is devoted to labor; consequently many have not the inclination to gain wisdom. But, again, there are many whose every spare moment is spent in reading and studying, — bent upon gaining all the information possible. They have not the free-and-easy, aristocratic manner, if you will, of the upper-tendom (execrable term!); but, after once unlocking the penetralia of their nature, they oftentimes put to shame those same ones by their information, gleaned in every imaginable way. But" — suddenly breaking off — "the rain is ceasing to fall. See how light it is growing in the west. We can soon be on the road. You must be very much fatigued, Miss Roberts."

"I am, and shall be inexpressibly glad when uncle's is reached. How far out of the world it seems!"

"Your world, — true. But this out-of-the-way country place is very beautiful during the summer months. There: the sun has made its appearance. We will delay no longer."

Five minutes later they were on their way, Black Huidah's prophecy safely stowed away on the person of Judge Roberts's daughter, who, owing to some sudden freak, was determined not to leave it behind.

Was Rossmere acquainted with the fact? It was hard to tell. But one thing was noticeable, — that his glance swept the floor of the hut ere assisting the lady into the carriage.

The residue of the ride was delightful. The air was exhilarating and life-giving after its purification by the storm. Countless songsters flitted in and out of the umbrageous trees, literally covered with drops that depended like translucent pearls or shone with all the brilliancy of diamonds as the sun flashed his rays upon them.

The farm-house was soon reached, where a hearty welcome awaited the guest, much anxiety having been experienced by them at the thought that she might be out in the storm.

When the girls, who assimilated at once, were alone in the pretty room attractively fitted up for the guest, Salome asked her cousin, —

"Now tell me, pray, who is Mr. Rossmere?"

The answer fell like a knell upon the

hearer, who was bent upon believing it untrue, —

“Our hired man.”

The next morning, at rather an early hour for her, Salome, attired in a light suit stylishly cut and trimmed, with her luxuriant dead-gold hair, containing never a hint of brown, hanging in two massive braids, knotted at the ends with a cerulean blue ribbon, came down the stairs, and out upon the lawn where the family were assembled, viewing some rare kind of a vine, which Willard had discovered in one of his rambles, and transplanted, and which was now running up, and attaching its tendrils to one of the rude pillars supporting the frame of a rustic arbor. Willard himself was not present.

“What is it that rivets your attention?” cried Salome gayly. “Have you unearthed some precious gem?”

“Not of the mineral but of the vegetable kind,” laughed Janet. “Come and see it, Salome. Mr. Rossmere, who is a true horticulturist, asserts that it is a *rara avis* of a vine.”

“Indeed!”

And Salome drew near to examine it.

It was certainly unique, with its spiked leaves, and saffron-hued, tiny blossoms; but it was not a bit pretty, and so Salome said after a cursory glance.

“Then you do not think it pretty, Miss Roberts?” questioned Rossmere, who had appeared upon the scene, and heard her remark.

“Any one with a particle of taste would assuredly not apply that complimentary adjective to it,” she said. “It is a hideous thing.”

Here Mary Ann came to the door to call them to breakfast; and all went inside, where a tempting meal was laid on the snowiest of linen. The windows were open to admit the pure morning air, and a bouquet of white violets on the table breathed forth a delightful perfume. Mary Ann did not eat with the family, but helped wait on the table. Willard, however, seated himself with the rest, and coolly proceeded to assist Miss Roberts to a tender piece of beefsteak. This was not according to Salome's idea of right; for in all of her lifetime she had never before sat down to eat with a man who was hired out to a farmer, her father being one of the proudest men

extant: but, “when you are among the Romans, you must do as the Romans do,” she quoted, after which she sensibly began to eat.

The meal was a lively one, ordinary topics of interest being discussed.

It was Sunday, and they were all to go to church. Accordingly, at about half-past nine, as the house of worship was some two miles distant, they started. Fine clothes, notwithstanding all said to the contrary, go a considerable ways toward making up a person's looks. The hired man, in his suit of black broadcloth, with immaculate white shirt-front, collar, and cuffs, was one's ideal of a prince; and the aristocratic girl, in a faultless costume of two shades of gray, waiting for him to assist her into the carriage, could not but acknowledge that he was more of a man in every respect than the major part of the popinjays and egotists who hovered about her at home.

The church was an unpretentious wooden structure, painted white, and built upon a foundation of rock. It was roomy, and not a bit comfortable, inside; the pews, odd affairs, with such high, stiff backs to the seats, that one could not close his eyes in slumber, however prosy the sermon, however tired he felt.

The family filled the pew to repletion. It was a decidedly warm morning, and fans were used vigorously by the feminine gender. Little Janet's pretty face was flushed a rich pink. Salome's, *au contraire*, was as devoid of color as usual: it really made one cool to look at her. Of course, as she was from the city, and a stranger, curious eyes were critically bent upon her, taking in the cut and quality of her garments, and the certain indescribable air of refinement clinging to her, making her altogether different from the country lassies in the neighborhood.

But the Presbyterian meeting-house was to be honored with the presence of another stranger that morning, — a gentleman from the city, who came with the Grangers, the gentry of —, inasmuch as the head of the family was the principal merchant there; or storekeeper, as the citizens termed him. This stranger was dark, and stoutly built, with long, dark whiskers; a rather grave and not unhandsome man of forty or thereabouts.

Miss Roberts saw him as he seated himself on the opposite side, in a pew a little

ahead of her. She started a trifle, then took the hymnal extended to her by Mr. Rossmere, who had been finding the hymn given out by the minister.

All rose as the organ pealed forth the tune, and the congregation began to sing, Willard's deep baritone voice, at once so cultivated and rich, distinctly heard through the building. It was a pleasure to listen to it, and Salome was sorry when the music ceased and the people took their seats.

The sermon was long, and eminently practical, the most of the congregation in nowise edified, and all felt relieved when it was concluded and the long prayer that followed. When the benediction had been pronounced, and the people were moving slowly down the long aisle, this stranger with the Grangers came up to the Lambert pew, and held out his hand to Salome, a warm smile lighting up the grave face.

"Miss Roberts! is it possible? I had no idea of seeing you here."

"Nor I you, Mr. Langley. How long do you remain in ——?"

"My time is not limited, therefore I am unable to say. I have business in this vicinity to transact, which will keep me a few days,—how many, I do not know. I am stopping with the Grangers,—relatives of our family. Salome," dropping his tone to so low a key that no one heard it save Rossmere, whose hearing was painfully acute, "did you get my note ere you left?"

"I did," the white lids dropping slowly over the dark blue eyes.

"And have pondered its contents?" in a rather hesitating tone.

"Somewhat," her voice dropping to a lower key,—a key so low now that Rossmere failed to gather in her answer.

The conversation was then discontinued, Salome proceeding to give those in the pew an introduction to Mr. Langley. As Janet nodded her pretty brown head, her cheeks red as the heart of a wild red rose, something akin to admiration came into the grave face and burned in the calm dark eyes. As his hand came in contact with the strong one of Rossmere he studied the face of its owner. Where had he seen it before? It was not easily forgotten; instead, it was one to linger in the memory a long time after being seen. But the Grangers were waiting for him, so with a "I shall call and see you tomorrow," to Salome, and a polite bow that included the rest, he

went down the aisle with his party; the Lamberts followed, and were soon at home, Salome *distrain* the remainder of the day. What was the cause of her depression of spirits? Was it owing to her meeting Mr. Langley? Willard Rossmere was of that opinion, and perhaps he was right, for, when about to retire that night, in the privacy of her room, she took out of her pocket a note, and thoughtfully perused its contents. The reading of it made her exceedingly nervous. How should she reply to it? A couple of days ago she had determined to give an affirmative answer: now— She supported her chin with her two hands and drifted off into a brown study. What should she do? Again she gathered in the contents of the note, which read thus:—

"MISS ROBERTS.—SALOME: You must have discovered ere this my affection for you. It has grown upon me so gradually that I can not tell when first I began to love you. Ay, I love you, and want to make you my wife. Will you be the mistress of my home and heart, Salome? You know that I am abundantly able to support you in as luxurious a style as you choose to dwell in, and you have been acquainted with me long enough to know whether you can respect and love me as your husband. Search your heart thoroughly, and see if you can be to me what I ask. Not a word of censure shall fall from my lips if you say me 'nay.' Ponder the question as long as you care to; I do not wish to hurry you, however embarrassing and uncomfortable my state of quarantine. To no other woman, remember, have I preferred a similar petition. You are the only one thus far who has wholly pleased me,—whom I think I can be happy with. Truly yours,

"ROBERT LANGLEY."

It seemed rather absurd to her that such a serious man as he should write thus. Did he really care for her? Or did he consider her a necessary appendage to his luxuriously appointed establishment, kept in order by an experienced housekeeper and a retinue of well-trained servants? He was one of those men perhaps who deemed a wife merely an essential note—the subdominant—in the domestic scale. But to be or not to be Mrs. Langley, one of the leaders of New-York society,—that was the question. He was the most eligible

parti she knew of, not bad looking, intelligent, overwhelmingly rich, and in every sense of the word a gentleman. Any of the girls of her set would have accepted him without demur, never thinking of the pros and cons, as she was doing; but long ago they had put him down as not being a marrying man, even though not averse to seeing others marry. She, herself, was much astounded when his proposal of marriage came. She respected him more than any man of her acquaintance: did she love him? Her cheeks grew warm with the blushes that mantled them as she hesitated. Then, with a little sigh born of, she knew not what, she opened her trunk, took therefrom writing materials, and selecting a heavy sheet of cream-tinted paper, elegantly monogrammed, and redolent of rose and frangipanni, in delicate, Italian-like calligraphy, proceeded to give an affirmative answer. Up to her window floated the song of "Robin Adair," hummed by Willard Rossmere, pacing the grassy lawn in the moonlight. The fingers guiding the pen trembled, and a big purple blot blurred the cream-tinted paper. With a slight anathema escaping her, she flung from her the sheet of paper, relinquishing the idea of finishing her note for the present, and peered through the blind at the erect figure walking to and fro, now whistling a merry tune, anon mute, with head bent abstractedly to the ground. When she disrobed for the night, she said, "I am too tired to write tonight; tomorrow when he comes I will give him a verbal answer, which will be easier and better in every way,—that is, if he pleads for it; otherwise, I shall take my time, as he told me to, accepting him in the end. The match will please father greatly."

She was on the croquet-ground with Janet, indifferently striking the balls, the next day when he drove up. She nodded, but did not break off the game, playfully remarking, "I am at the centre arch, homeward bound, Mr. Langley, while Janet is for the same arch going down, so you see she has but just started on her journey. If you will but have a moment's patience, we will be ready to minister to your manifold wants."

"All right," he laughed, as he descended from the buggy, "I will watch you finish the game."

It was Janet's turn now. She sent her

ball through her arch, then hit her adversary's, and making a brilliant "split-stroke," went through the side wicket, playing the while with a spirit, an *elan* that was irresistibly charming. The man of forty found himself anxiously awaiting the issue, his sympathies with the farmer's pretty daughter, who finally won the game. The ladies now devoted their time to Mr. Langley, who, after a pleasant call, invited them to ride. Janet declined, pleading work, and Salome went with him alone. She expected him to speak of the note. He never mentioned it, evidently determining, as he had said, to give her an abundance of time to decide. And she felt thankful that the momentous subject was omitted. The ride was enjoyable, and as they drove up the avenue on their return leading to the lawn in front of the house, Miss Roberts's laugh rang out sweet and clear. Rossmere, cutting down some grass along the fence, heard it. He pulled his wide straw hat a bit lower over his face. Why had this girl come to the farm to disturb his peace of mind? As the gate was closed, Mr. Langley must needs alight and open it, or call upon some one to perform the office for him. The latter being the easier way, seeing a man in his shirt-sleeves handling a scythe, he carelessly cried out, as most men would have done, —

"Herel you fellow, come and open the gate for me!"

The man swinging the scythe heeded not the call.

Salome, enjoying the thing, and anxious to see what the hired man would do, said, elevating her voice a trifle, —

"Mr. Rossmere, are you deaf? Did you not hear Mr. Langley? He wants you to open the gate for him."

Her aggressive tone stung him. He stopped his labor, and drawing up his tall figure, said quietly, —

"Want must be his master then. If Mr. Langley had addressed me in a less supercilious way, civilly, and not as a master speaks to his slave, I would willingly have rendered him assistance. As it is," a bit maliciously, "unless you have the notion yourself to get out of the carriage and open the gate, he must perforce do it."

"His majesty hath spoken: will his subject obey?"

Although she spoke lightly, and exteriorly was unmoved, he had nettled her; un-

derlying her anger, however, was a vein of admiration for the manly bronzed fellow, about whom there was nothing abject or cowardly.

"I will do as I am bidden," was the reply; and Mr. Langley jumped out, opened the gate, led the horse through, then closed it, after which he held out his hand. "Mr. Rossmere, I accept your rebuke. It was merited. I spoke thoughtlessly, not recognizing you as the gentleman I was introduced to yesterday in church, but taking you at your word for Mr. Lambert's hired man, which does not palliate the offence in your eyes I see, as one should be as careful in his speech to one who works for a living as to one who does not."

Willard Rossmere did not shake the proffered hand. He said, —

"I trust I am a gentleman, nevertheless I am Mr. Lambert's hired man."

"Impossible!" almost broke from the man's lips, but he checked the exclamatory word, and said, —

"It matters not. Are you not going to shake hands in token of forgiveness?"

They shook hands cordially, each acknowledging the worth of the other, still not altogether on friendly terms. As the carriage moved on, the man leaning against the scythe whispered low to himself, —

"He is a true man, and worthy even of becoming master of that proud girl's destiny."

Mr. Langley without much urging remained to tea. It was observable that his calm eyes often rested admiringly on Janet's rosebud of a face; oftener and more admiringly than on the lily fair one of the girl whose hand he had sought in marriage. Was he fickle-minded, — a flirt? "A wild-wood blossom is a novelty to the New-York gentleman," thought Rossmere savagely, "but he would never care to transplant it to his city home, when a magnificent calla is at hand. Is he engaged to Miss Roberts, I wonder? Plague take it! that cool, fatally fair girl has bewitched me. I wish with all my heart she had staid at home!"

When Langley took his departure that night it was settled that he should drive the two girls the next day to Prospect Hill, situated five miles distant, where one of the grandest views of the whole country was to be had.

Time, star-like, moved on. Violet-wreathed May was supplanted by rose-

crowned June; July with her fervid days came on apace, yet Mr. Langley remained at the Grangers', and Miss Roberts at the farm-house, though both had talked of leaving some time before. The proposal of marriage had never been mentioned again; the subject was tacitly avoided by both. Why, it would be hard to say, as the gentleman regarded her as his future wife, the lady him as her future husband. There were walks and drives, occasionally picnics, fairs and croquet-parties in the village, in all of which the city guests entered with a gusto that surprised them. Rossmere, whose hands were full, rarely participated in these harmless amusements; when he did he was quite a lion among the country lasses with his handsome face, splendid figure, and easy flow of small talk. He and Miss Roberts did not get on at all together. A war of words was invariably the result of a meeting. She could not ignore his presence if she tried; his was a nature that would not be "put down." She essayed to analyze her feelings toward this man. Was love or hate predominant? Sometimes she felt as though, if it were not for her father, she could be content to live with this man in a cottage the remainder of her days, providing he ever asked her. And he, to her fancy, regarded her as a sort of butterfly creature, a fashionable woman, whose sole aim in life was to set off her beauty advantageously by the accessories of dress, and like the lotus-eater live a life of no use to others, of no use to herself. Was the man made of stone? He was as cool and indifferent as an octogenarian to her. Had pretty Janet taken captive his fancy? What an artless, unsophisticated creature she was? *En passant*, had not her admirer — the grave man of forty — recently striven hard to please her? Was he sorry that he had sued for her hand ere meeting the farmer's daughter? Her heart beat madly with glee a second, then visions of a princely city establishment swept before her, where to reign as mistress was the chief aim of all her girl friends, and she hated Willard Rossmere bitterly because of the wondrous power he exerted over her, and made up her mind to accept Mr. Langley the next time he came. Then, when in his presence, she trembled lest he should broach the momentous subject. It was never introduced, and, woman-like, at his departure she was wroth that he kept silent.

One lovely morning, when the roses were sweet with their baptism of dew, when the birds sang as if their very souls were going forth in melody, and Janet had gone with Mr. Langley to ride, Salome put on her "broad-brim," and taking a volume of Tennyson in her hand went out on the lawn and seated herself at the foot of an apple-tree, whose branches freighted with green fruit hung low over her head. Insects chirped noisily in the grass; the slender leaves of the tall poplar ahead of her were in motion; and away, farther still, at the foot of the gradually sloping hill, like a magnified emerald in its setting of green, was a tiny pond. Willard Rossmere, sauntering along in his easy way, espied her. A second his eyes rested madly on her fair face, then he stepped up to her quietly, holding out a bunch of maiden-hair.

"Will you not accept, Miss Roberts? I tore it from a rock where it clung, its lovely tresses flowing over and veiling from sight a solitary Naiad who has slept beneath it since the beginning of ages."

"Oh, how lovely!" taking the offering *in her hand*, and paying him in thanks. "'Tis the prettiest of all ferns. Is n't it Pliny who said that, though you plunge it in water, it will still keep dry? What is its signification?"

"Discretion,—Secrecy. Botanists have in vain studied this plant, which conceals effectually the secret of its flowers and seed, confiding to Zephyr the invisible germs of its young family,—that is, according to the botany I consulted. What a glorious morning! The winged creatures of the air, and the crawling creatures of the earth, are filled with happiness. What sweet daisies nodding in the green grass! and how soothing the hum, hum of the bees in the tree. By the way, Miss Roberts, you expressed a wish in my hearing once to go out on the pond some morning in quest of water-lilies. I have leisure this morning, and, if you elect, will give you a sail. What do you say?"

"That I shall be eternally thankful to you if you will. The morning is delightful, and water-lilies are my favorite flowers."

"Are you ready to go?"

"I am. I have my 'broad-brim,' and I shall take this volume of Tennyson with me, so that if you prove a dull companion, or wax belligerent as you often do, I may

solace myself with some of the Laureate's sublime thoughts."

"All right. I promise to be so entertaining that even Tennyson shall fail of securing a thought from you whilst on the pond. Let's go."

Down the hill, merry as two children, they went, at peace with each other the first time for days. How long would this peace last? It was as dangerous to them as the claws of a lioness sheathed when she first beholds an enemy. Willard assisted her in the little white boat, took a seat by her side, then with his oars sent it floating over the pond like some graceful white swan. Salome dipped her white hands in the water, and sent a shower of diamond drops over him, her bell-like laugh ringing joyously out, as he ducked his head to escape the glittering missiles, so charming and lovable the while that the man guiding the boat to where waxen-white lilies lay calmly on the water could scarcely refrain from dropping the oars, and, clasping her in his arms, silencing those red lips with a rain of passionate kisses. Was she only leading him on to ensnare him in the meshes of the net she had woven for him? "No, no, my Circe," he murmured, "I am no silly sylphide to be snared in your magical web. You are supernaturally fair, more fascinating than words can tell, and I worship you with the blind idolatry of an Indian fakir, but I shall never humble myself sufficiently to ask you to be my wife only to be refused."

But the moments were perilously sweet to him drifting, slowly drifting over the emerald-green water, above which rested the flowers of the genus *Nymphæa Lotus*, with the girl he loved. He gathered handfuls of the fragrant blossoms and tossed them in her lap. As she inhaled their fragrance, in a voice soft and low as Lear's daughter's, she repeated Tennyson's beautiful lines,—

"How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
With half-shut eyes ever to seem
Falling asleep in a half-dream!
To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height;
To hear each others' whispered speech;
Eating the Lotos day by day,
To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
And tender curving lines of creamy spray."

"You like Tennyson?" he said, plucking another handful of the lovely water-lily blooms.

"He is above praise from his friends, or censure from his enemies," she replied, watching the long line of rippling light in the wake of the boat caused by the oar she was idly pulling through the water.

On, on they drifted, giving themselves up to the pleasures of the hour, content to let the future take care of itself.

The clash came. The calm was broken up in a storm that was inevitably the result of their conversation. It happened in a provoking way, Salome thought. In pulling her handkerchief out of her pocket, Mr. Langley's note, which she had thrust there hastily a few days ago, after perusing it for the hundredth time, came with it, unobserved by both, and floated in among the lily-pads. Rossmere was the first to observe it.

"A *billet-doux*, by all that's good! and deposited there, doubtless, by some dusky maiden of the wildwood for one of the Indian gods frequently represented as seated on this flower. Shall I read it? It may prove diverting."

Even then it did not occur to Salome that she had seen the note before.

"Yes, read it, please, if it prove to be a communication to the god."

He spread out the crumpled paper, and gathered in the contents in a trice; and then, mad with pain at what he had read, but managing to veil the feeling from her, he handed her the note.

"This is your property, Miss Roberts. I beg your pardon for making myself acquainted with it. I had no idea it belonged to you."

Not a bit of the pain throbbing at his heart found itself in his voice. Perfectly cool and even it was.

Miss Roberts accepted it without comment. No emotion on her part either. The snowy lids drooped till the dark lashes rested on her cheeks; and one white hand crept up to her brow, across which it moved a couple of times,—that was all. Could he not break that patrician calm?

"The grandest fish of the season is caught at last," he finally said. "You are not an amateur, Miss Roberts, but an adept in the piscatorial art. With what did you bait your hook, pray?"

The mellifluous voice took on a tone of

pride: the mouth, red as a cleft strawberry, curved disdainfully.

"You should be ashamed of your taunt, sir. It was ungentlemanly and — uncalled for."

"I agree with you perfectly. Accept my congratulations, and hereafter I will be — still and secret as the grave."

"It is immaterial to me how you act in the future. If I baited my hook for a prize, you yourself have been angling for quite as rich an one. When does Uncle Nathan bestow upon his hired man his one ewe-lamb, his pretty little daughter?"

Both were growing angry and impolite, and saying bitter things that would rankle in the heart long after the words were uttered.

To be accused of anything so despicable as that! His tranquillity was broken up, he forgot all things but his mad love for the girl at his side: hot, passionate words lay on his lips, struggling for utterance.

"Miss Roberts," he said, turning his eyes, glowing like coals of living fire in his white, set face, upon her, "do you believe me guilty of what you have accused me? Then pray listen, for I am going to reveal to you the secret of my heart, asking nothing, expecting nothing, hoping nothing, from you. Till I met you, I never dreamed of love. Now, girl, proud, cold, unfeeling girl, with no more heart than Minerva was blessed with, the moments I spend in your presence, cruelly as you, through your indifference, have treated me, are as heaven to me. Scorn, hate me, if you will: I have told you the truth. With all my heart I love you."

His voice died away. The boat drifted on and on. Salome Roberts never stirred. She sat with bowed head, with clasped hands, the sweet-scented waxen blooms strewn about her. Ever after, the sight of one of those spotless lilies brought up vividly before her the scene on the water, — the words she had listened to, sweet to her as similar ones to Eve when Adam spoke them in the Garden of Eden. A variety of expressions stole over her fair face; into eyes less serene than hers something which would have been called passion leaped; then one white, slim hand crept pleadingly toward the brown one resting on the oar: but the man's face was turned away, — bent eastward, where Apollo shivered the blue of the heavens with long lines of light.

The hand dropped, nerveless, in her lap, crushing the white lilies resting there, and sending up a perfume that made the girl feel faint. All the light died out of her eyes. He had asked nothing at her hands; therefore nothing could she tender him. Oh! why did he tell her he loved her if he did not ask her to be his wife? At present she would gladly renounce ambition, pomp, and wealth,—all earthly pleasures,—if he would but pillow her head on his breast, only smooth back the hair from her brow, and kiss her,—kiss her.

"Willard!"

She attempted the word; but it was strangled in her throat. Her voice, for the time being, was gone. Her eyes fastened imploringly on his face. It was grave unto sadness.

The rippling water, the trill of the birds, brought him back to himself. The unused oars were again brought into action, and he pulled lustily for the shore.

No word from either till it was reached. Then, as she gathered up in her arms handfuls of the sweet lilies, she said,—

"I thank you, Mr. Rossmere, for the sail. I shall not forget it when I am far away. Tomorrow morning I start for Niagara, to meet a party of friends there."

The hand burdened with blooms was not steady. It dropped one of her treasures—pure, white, drenched with the waters of the pond—as she courteously bent her head, and walked onward up the hill. He picked it up, caressed it, and carried it to his room. Well he had not given her the opportunity to reject him. Going away! Like a death-knell to him were the words; through all the long, long hours of the day they rang in his ears,—they were ringing still at twilight, when he stood out on the veranda, letting the cool breeze blow over his uncovered head. The Lamberts were gone to the village, and Miss Roberts had not returned from her ramble with Mr. Langley.

He walked into the parlor, sat down at the piano, and, running his strong, brown fingers over the keys, began to play such weird, ghostly airs, that the two coming up the walk shivered, and the lady involuntarily drew closer to the man, as if seeking his protection.

It was this act, perhaps, which caused the gentleman to repeat his declaration of love.

She listened *ex necessitate rei*, drew herself away from the protecting arm, and, turning upon him a face splendidly calm and passionless in the gloaming, refused him,—firmly though very gently refused him.

"Pardon me," she said, "if by my silence I have given you any encouragement. I thought that the respect I bore you might ripen into a feeling stronger than friendship. But it has not, and I will not marry you merely to reign as mistress in your princely establishment. *En passant*, I do not think you are sorry. You chose me out of a 'rose-bud garland of girls,' as Tenyson prettily puts it, because you deemed me fairer than my sister-flowerets, and said to yourself that I would look well at the head of your table, and grace well your kingly home. Is it not so, sir? And, since seeing my Cousin Janet, have you not learned your first lesson in love?"

The man of forty actually blushed. He stammered,—

"I—I— Really, Miss Roberts, since you have spoken frankly and to the point, I will address you in the same way. It is as you say. The admiration I felt for you I wrongly called love; but, having written you that note, I felt in duty bound to give you the chance of accepting or rejecting me. You have rejected me. Now I can honorably offer my hand to Janet. I love her. Do—do you think I stand any chance of winning her? Has n't she a *penchant* for Rossmere?"

"Not now, I'm sure. She rather liked him previous to meeting you. Shall we not proceed to the house?"

The sad music within had ceased, and in its stead floated out to them that gem of waltzes, "The Beautiful Blue Danube."

Salome Roberts, with a thoughtful countenance, tossed aside the newspaper she had been reading. It was rife with the sayings and doings of a fortune-teller, who suddenly and mysteriously had made her appearance in the city, coming from—no one knew where. Some called her an Egyptian; others, a negress. About her was an air of mystery that quickened curiosity among the people, ever on the alert to ferret out a secret. Her rooms, from morning till night, were thronged with a miscellaneous crowd, eager to test her skill in disentangling the threads of one's destiny.

Was it not the same creature who had traced on parchment the prophecy she had brought with her from the forest hut, and still kept? The description of both tallied precisely.

Her decision was made. She would go and see her, and have her read a page of her future life.

It was a day in December; quite a chilly day, with the snow falling white and silently to the ground, which it covered with a mantle of ermine, — so pure, so beautiful, that a queen, I ween, would not disdain to wrap a similar one about her royal shoulders.

She ordered out the sleigh, and proceeded to make her toilet, muffling herself in fur from head to foot. Something prompted her to roll up the sibyl's prophecy, and carry it with her.

As the sleigh glided over, and crushed beneath its runners, the infinitesimal flakes of snow, Salome had almost a notion to relinquish the errand she had in view. She did not, however, and soon found herself in a room crowded with people of both sexes, of all ages.

She was obliged to wait her turn, which seemed an age. Closely veiled, she paid no attention to the crowd about her. She did start a trifle, though, as a gentleman, tall and of distinguished bearing, rose, and followed a little black boy into the presence of the seeress. He reminded her so vividly of Rosmere. Could it be he?

A few moments longer, and then the boy returned, and motioned her to follow him. She did so, ascending two long flights of stairs, and presently found herself in a small, dark room, brightened by an open-mouthed fireplace, in which a few sticks of hemlock sputtered and burned, and diffused their heat. A little table, on which a solitary, iron-clasped, ponderous tome lay; a single chair; a rude settee, — that was all the room contained in the way of furniture. A curtain hung up before an embrasure at the right of the door.

Salome drew back her veil, and scrutinized the fortune-teller. She was an uncommonly tall, large woman, black as night itself. On her head was a gay-hued turban, and about her figure was a garment possessing all the colors of the rainbow. Her countenance was expressionless and stolid, withal repulsive. She stood before the fireplace, grim and silent, her gaze bent upon

the mass of ruby coals between the andirons.

"Mother Huldah," said Salome, "knowest thou why I am come? Do the minions of the black majesty you serve tell you why?"

"They do," she replied in a tone slow and labored; neither rising nor falling, but retaining the same level as she proceeded. "They warn me of all who come, and why they come. Shall I tell you, girl, in order that you may drop your incredulous air, savoring of blasphemy, in my presence? Take from your pocket the roll on which a prophecy is traced. I will tell you of the man of whom it speaks."

Was the woman a witch? If not — Her hand slipped almost involuntarily into her pocket, and brought forth the scroll, Black Huldah meanwhile studying the coals. She handed it to her, saying, —

"Hast ever seen it before, mother?"

"Ay, child," she answered without examining the scroll in her hand.

"And thy hand traced the cabalistic characters thereon?"

"Ay, verily. And the prophecy contained has in part come true. *The rest is fast* approaching truth. The man and girl met and loved. She struggled hard to overcome her love; he likewise. Both signally failed. Kismet! it was fate. Why struggle against it? As well might the lark when it meets the eye of the snake, and circles above it in ecstasy, but to drop a prey to it at the appointed time. Child, stoop down. Kneel where the firelight can play athwart your features. Hold out your hand now."

"But shall I not cross yours with silver first?"

"It is the usual custom, child."

Salome tendered her a gold-piece instead, which had the effect of brightening up the stolid countenance an instant; then, as the light died out as the red from an expiring coal, she took into her black, claw-like hand the velvety, white one of the girl. Closely she studied the lines.

"A smooth, happy, almost uneventful life has been yours," said the fortune-teller. — "almost the life of a lotus-eater. You were born and bred in the lap of luxury. Everything you sighed for was yours, — everything with but one exception; and that, the greatest blessing of all, was denied you. And why? A bit of coldness on your part, a vast amount of pride on his. The

cloud is sweeping away; the sun is about to shine forth. Girl, dainty girl, he is worthy of you; he is not what you deem him. Beats your heart a trifle faster at the sound of his voice?"

"It does, mother. Oh! can you tell me of him?"

For all reply, Huldah swept aside the curtain shrouding the aperture, and out stepped a man,—a tall, kingly man, who, as the girl trembled, and hid her shamed, blushing face in her hands, looked passionately into the ocean-tinted eyes avoiding his.

"Salome, darling, do you love me?"

No reply; no sound save the retreating footsteps of the black sibyl.

"Answer me, girl," a bit imperatively. "Put aside your coldness and pride for the nonce. Lovest thou me?"

He was hungering for the reply hanging on her trembling lips, but she could not give it. She could only put her white hand in his, waiting to clasp it, and by that he knew that his life henceforth was to be blessed with her love. He drew the fair face to his breast, and fondly kissed it,—kissed it till its marble pallor was stained with red.

"When may I claim you as my own, Salome,—as my wife?"

"Whenever you elect," rising hastily from the floor; "but tell me how you happened to be here now?"

"To interview Black Huldah concerning you. Don't blush so, Salome; there is no need. When your step sounded on the stairs, she thrust me behind the curtain, saying mysteriously, 'Your fate awaits you. Make no noise, but be prepared for what is to happen.' When I saw what you had in your hand, and heard you speak, I could scarcely keep from crying out,—my heart beat so with joy. There, you are blushing again! Never mind! those red roses warm up your cold cheeks wondrously. But this," stooping down and picking up the parchment on the floor, "*has done its work*. Shall I not toss it in the fire?"

"Nay, I wish to retain it always; 't is inexpressibly dear to me."

He escorted her down to the sleigh, promising to call on the morrow.

"I would remain home this evening if possible, Willard; but Mrs. La Grange would never forgive me, as she made me promise to be at her house this evening without fail. A lion is to be on exhibi-

tion,—a Mr. Houston, who is loaded down with such appellations as "splendid creature," "mysterious being," and the like. I half mistrust that Mrs. La Grange contemplates making me Mrs. Houston with or without the gentleman's consent. So I may not be your wife after all."

He smiled inscrutably, lifted his hat, and the sleigh drove on.

Salome Roberts was peerless that evening as she stood under the full blaze of the gilded chandelier, walled in by a crescent of *celebrities*, wit and *persiflage* circling around her. She was simply dressed. Black tulle floated about her like the night. Her superabundance of blonde hair was caught up in some inexplicable way, vastly becoming, by a solitary golden arrow. On one white arm, rounded and beautiful as the one George Eliot describes in her 'Mill on the Floss,' was coiled a dead-gold snake, whose tiny emerald eyes scintillated with her every movement.

"Salome, dear, allow me to present to you, Mr. Houston. Mr. Houston, Miss Roberts."

As gracefully as a white lily bends beneath the passing breeze that caresses it, Salome bent her head in acknowledgment of the introduction, the lovely arrowy ornament in her hair bright as if tipped with flame; then, glancing up, she beheld her lover,—him who was once her uncle's hired man. She could not understand it. Had she not been mistaken in the name?

Later, leaning on the arm of her lover, she passed into the green-house, where balls of fire glowed amongst the green foliage of the plants. Under a lovely foreign tree, with drooping branches gemmed with fragrant white blossoms, he seated her.

"Now, Salome," he said, "ask the question you've been longing to ask since my introduction to you. How came I here, and transformed from a hired man into a gentleman of the world,—the 'lion' of the evening as you were pleased to term me? The tale is short; hence permit me to relate it. Left an orphan at an early age, friendless and poor, I was adopted by a wealthy, generous man, by the name of Houston. He regarded me as his son, I him as my father. A year ago last spring a coldness sprang up between us, occasioned by my being unable to accede to the plans he had formed for me. He wished me to marry the daughter of his most intimate friend,

for whom I had not a particle of love. By the way, she was a cousin of Mr. Langley, whom I once met at her house. You remember he was always trying to recall where he had met me ere he came to the farm-house. Well, this coldness between us did not cease, and Mr. Houston finally warned me that if I did not take a wife of his selection he should disinherit me. For his money I cared not, but his affection I did covet. I left him, and sought work. After striving vainly to secure a lucrative situation, I hired out to Mr. Lambert as a farm-hand, although it was entirely new work for me. Late that fall, some three months after you left, a telegram came to me, containing the sad news that he, who had been a father to me, was dying. I went to him, just in time to receive his

blessing. He died, leaving me heir to all his wealth, and without conditions. So, darling, you 'll not be ashamed of me after all."

"That I could never be, dear Willard. I was a foolish girl in the days dead and gone. Henceforth I will try to be a true woman."

And nobly she kept her word.

On the first day of the year, when the snow lay white and pure on the ground, and the sunlight lay warm and bright on the window-panes, there, at the old farm-house, Robert Langley and Janet Lambert were married. In a distant city, on the same day, at the same hour, another ceremony was being performed, and Judge Roberts's daughter was transformed into the wife of him who was once "Nathan Lambert's hired man."

CEDAR BUD'S REVENGE.

BY WILLIAM H. BUSHNELL.

CHAPTER I.

"I tell you," said George Harding, a gay young lieutenant, to one of his companions, as they were returning to Fort Clark after a more than usually successful hunt in the vicinity of the Black Hills, "that was the most beautiful squaw I ever saw. I have heard and read many romantic tales about Indian beauties, but never believed one of them until now."

"Well, suppose the girl was pretty, what is that to you?"

"To me, Ned Greenwood? Why, simply that I am going to make love to her, and"—

"Make a fool of yourself."

"Pshaw! You are making a very serious matter of it, Ned."

"Not more so than you may find it. The girl is happy as she now is,—happy in her ignorance. To transplant her to another mode of life, to other society, would simply result, like the caging of a wild bird, in misery and death."

"Anything more, my sage mentor?"

"Yes. Take this Indian girl and put her within the walls of a civilized dwelling, and she would beat her heart against the prison bars, no matter how golden they might be."

"Is that all?" and the question was followed by a merry laugh.

"Not quite. No matter how much you might love her, no matter how tender you might be, she would soon wither beneath the slight that society would put upon her and you; so, if you have a single spark of manhood, you would be in constant pain for the sufferings of your wife."

"Wife?"

"Certainly. On no other condition could you think of gaining the love of this forest beauty."

"Wife?" again repeated George Harding, as if he did not fully understand the meaning of his companion. "Wife? A devilish pretty figure I would cut, to be sure, returning to my lady mother and aristocratic sisters and friends tied to a squaw, even if she were twice as handsome as Pocahontas is represented to be, in both story and song.

I can fancy the reception she would meet with."

"Then, if you have other views, you are a"—

The roll of the drum as it broke harshly on the soft summer air at eventide kept his companion from hearing the opprobrious epithet he used; and separating at the moment, each hastened to his quarters. But enough had been spoken to rive asunder the chain of friendship that had hitherto bound them together. Harding, in their brief conversation, had laid bare the blackness of his heart and baseness of his purpose; and Greenwood, gallant soldier and true man as he was, shrank from association with him as he would from contamination.

Discipline in that far-away frontier fort in times of peace was somewhat lax, and George Harding, an officer, found little difficulty in wandering abroad at his pleasure; while Private Greenwood was forced to keep at his post. True, the commandant wondered at the sudden fancy his young lieutenant had taken for hunting, and more so, that he generally returned empty-handed, when game was plenty, and he was known to be one of the best shots in the little garrison. But all were ennuied with their dull routine and incidentless life, and the good old man could not find it in his heart to blame any one for seeking some means to relieve its monotony. None, therefore, questioned of the lieutenant's coming or going, and none, except Greenwood, had any clew as to the real motive of his wanderings. But he was in the ranks, and wisely kept his own council. It would not do for him to impeach the conduct of one above him in rank and authority.

Floating down the swift-running waters of one of the many little streams that empty into the Missouri, Harding first saw the Indian girl after his conversation with Ned Greenwood. Like a yellow water-lily, her canoe glided through the fiery glow of a summer sunset. Gaudily and yet tastefully and picturesquely dressed, and with Indian pinks braided in her long hair and flashing their brilliant crimson from its in-

tense blackness; with the olive of her cheek flushed by exercise and warmed to a glow by the rays of the fast-setting sun, the most inveterate skeptic with regard to beauty among the red children of woodland and prairie would have owned himself, for once at least, in the wrong.

For a time Harding watched her as she floated on unconscious of his presence, — gazed admiringly on the rounded arms, coverless from hand to shoulder, save a band or two of shining silver; on the full and perfectly formed bust, the soft and long lashes that shaded the sloe-like eyes, and the almost matchless grace of that untutored child of the wilderness, — gazed, admired, and perchance felt for a moment a holy and true passion springing up in his heart; for Beauty, the girl, and Love, the boy, weave as potent charms amid the flowers of the prairie as in the saloons of wealth and fashion.

The canoe drifted rapidly by him, and a cry of terror burst from the lips of the Indian girl even as he was enthralled by the picturesque beauty of the scene before him. Well he knew the little river, and in an instant it flashed upon him that she was hastening toward a dangerous rapid and already within the power of its rushing current. With the cry that escaped her lips, her slender paddle struck the foaming waters, and for a single moment the downward course of the frail bark appeared to be checked. Then, as if the tough ash had been but a dry reed, it broke in twain, and she was whirled headlong toward the ragged rocks and wildly boiling, hissing waters.

To have attempted her rescue then would have been madness, and Harding dashed down the bank of the stream to save her, if possible, at the foot of the fall. He saw the little bark crushed in its passage between two sharp rocks; saw the Indian girl lifted by the force of the waves over them and hurled fathoms ahead into the foaming flood, gasping, struggling, wildly for life. To free himself from his weapons and more cumbersome garments and plunge into the comparatively still water was the work of an instant. A strong and active swimmer, he watched his opportunity, seized her as she was passing, and drifting with the current, was enabled to land safely. One educated in any other school than that of the nomadic red man would have perished before he could have reached her. But not so the In-

dian girl; and soon she sat wringing the water from her long wet hair, and looking with wondering eyes upon the pale-faced stranger who had ventured his life for her, though she suffered little from her unexpected and unwelcome bath.

Gratitude for life is the same everywhere, and the words that the lip breathes are identical in meaning whether coming from civilized or savage; and soon those of the red woman were eloquent with thanks. *Siy*, however, was she, as the red deer that hid itself among the alder bushes that margined the stream, and George Harding felt when they parted that his love-making had met with poor success even after the favorable opening for it that had occurred. But he knew enough of Indian character — of the perfect command of their feelings, of their usual reserve and taciturnity of manner, not to be discouraged by the apparent coldness of this forest beauty, and doubted not that time and skillful management would ripen the cold flowers of gratitude into rosy fruit of love.

Duties that he could neither put off nor avoid detained him for many days subsequent to his adventure within and about the fort, and when he was again ready to set out on one of his so-called hunting excursions, he was hailed by the bluff old commandant with, —

"Lieutenant, see that you bring something home today. My mouth is watering for a saddle of venison. Don't fail to bring me one, or I'll have to send Ned Greenwood in your place the next time, for he never fails to replenish the larder; and mine needs it sadly now, I can tell you. What with salt horse and briney pork, I am almost reduced to the condition of Lot's wife!"

"I will not fail, sir."

"Well, don't, my boy, don't. If our Great Father at Washington" (as the redskins called the president) "knew how we suffered for something fit to eat out here on the frontier, I reckon he'd cut our term of service short, and give some one else a chance to win glory watching these confounded skulking savages. But go along, and bring me — Hollo! what have you got there?" he added, suddenly, as he saw a little Indian boy crossing the parade ground, bearing a tiny basket. "Bring it here to me, you young ragamuffin."

But the boy passed him without paying the least attention to his request, and plac-

ing the curiously woven splint-work in the hands of Harding, departed without a word.

"What in thunder have you got there, lieutenant?" asked his superior officer.

From the depths of the basket Harding drew a belt of brilliantly dyed wampum, lavishly embroidered and fringed with beads.

"Aha!" continued the commandant, "a gift from some young squaw. Here, Ned Greenwood, you know all the signs of these red-skinned gentry: tell us what tribe this comes from."

"Mandan," was the only reply of the soldier, as he handed back the belt after examining the "totem," closely, that was woven upon it. But his eyes met those of Harding, and a whole volume of scorn was condensed into a single glance.

"Take care, my boy," said the old officer, as he turned away. "Take care that you don't get into water beyond your depth. I've fought Indians this thirty years, and know them well."

"No fear for me, sir," replied Harding, with a gay laugh, as he bound the belt around him and shouldered his rifle. "I chanced to save a young squaw from drowning, and she has sent me this as a reward, I suppose," and he hastily left the fort.

CHAPTER II.

Months passed rapidly, and George Harding had won the love of the artless Indian girl. He was "the ocean to the river of her thoughts, that terminated all." By stealth they met in the fastness of the forest, for he dared not let the commandant know of his stolen interviews, and she knew how bitterly her tribe would resent and punish her love for a pale-face who was in arms against them. Thus far their secret had been well kept, for none but Greenwood had even an inkling of the truth, and with him it was mere surmise, not actual knowledge.

Together, near the spot of their first meeting, they sat amid the soft, rosy haze of an October noon, she listening eagerly to his every word, and he gazing upon her upturned face. At times her features were radiant with hope and joy, and at others a dark shadow, as of doubt, flitted across them. Could a pale-face thus forget home and early training and associations, and love one of a despised race? Madly as she loved him, yet there were hours when she

could not believe that her happiness was real, not a delusive dream.

"Cedar Bud," said Harding, "do you remember the time when we first met?"

"It will never be forgotten," was the low-whispered reply. "The evil spirits of the waters were dragging me down, when the strong arm of the pale-face snatched me from their grasp."

"But you did not love me then. You would not even give me a kiss in payment for the danger I had run to save you."

"The heart of the daughter of Black Smoke was filled with gratitude."

"But now?"

"It has gone from her keeping. Should she call, it would not come back again. Like the little bird that has found its wings strong enough for flight, it has left its resting-place to return no more forever."

"But the kiss, Cedar Bud, the kiss?"

"The pale-face has paid himself as many times as there are leaves on the trees. The Indian girl may not deny him she loves now," and she held up her lips, red as the sunny side of the ripest cranberry, to receive his caress.

"Then you do love me?"

"As the dry earth the rain, the flower the sunshine, and the deer the soft moss by the brookside. Since we met, straight has been the trail between us, and no grass has grown upon it."

"Is it so, indeed, Cedar Bud?"

"She has shown the pale-face her naked heart."

"And you will go with me where I go, — will be mine?"

"From the wigwams of her people has the spirit of the daughter of the red man gone. She can but follow it. But is the heart of the pale warrior as true as that of the Indian girl? Will he not go away and forget her?" and she looked questioningly out of her soft, fawn-like eyes as if she would learn whether truth or falsehood lay hid in those of her lover.

"Go away and forget you, beauty? No, no!"

"Then Cedar Bud is happy!" and she nestled still more closely in his arms, — nestled as a dove long storm-tossed would beside its mate in the safely sheltered nest.

"But what if I should leave you? What if I should go away and never see you again?"

"Never see me again!" and her eyes

flashed wildly and her entire frame trembled with a terrible emotion as she sprang from him and stood leaning, as if for support, against a tree. "Never see Cedar Bud again! Then the words of the pale warrior would be as false as those of the Matcha Manitou when he lures the red man down to the black depths of the mountain cavern; like the hissing and forked tongue of the serpent, he would have but uttered lies!"

"But what would you do?"

"Like the fawn when the arrow of the hunter is quivering in its heart, and its blood is staining the green leaves, Cedar Bud would seek the lonely thicket,—and die."

As if her words had been a spell to conjure up the very thing she had compared herself to, a spotted fawn came slowly struggling through the thick woods at the moment. It had outrun its strength. Its soft eyes were lustreless, its slender limbs trembling, its mottled sides flecked with foam. A bloody froth was dropping from its open mouth: its every step was marked by crimson drops. For a single instant, as it saw the white man, it strove to dash away, and then reeled, tottered, and fell at the very feet of the surprised Indian girl, staining her dainty moccasins with its heart's blood.

"Look!" she said, with startling earnestness, as she pointed to the dead fawn. "Look, pale-face! Thus would it be with the child of the red man, should she be deserted, and her heart given to the black and evil spirits of despair!"

For a moment George Harding, false and unfeeling as he was, shrank back from the tall and commanding figure now drawn to its utmost height,—from the outstretched arm and pointing finger, and the eyes that flashed upon him, fitful and vivid as lightning. Then he commanded himself, and with a gay though forced laugh, replied,—

"Pshaw, beauty! don't worry your dear little heart any more about the matter. I was only jesting,—only testing your love, that's all."

"And you will never leave me?"

"Never."

"Will the pale-face swear it by the good Manitou he worships?"

"What better or stronger would that make it?"

Even while plotting the ruin of innocence, his very soul shrank from calling upon God

to witness its forgery, strange as it may seem. And such a paradox is the human heart.

"And he will not leave Cedar Bud to pine and die like the poor fawn when the stony-headed arrow has pierced its heart?" still persistently questioned the girl.

"No, no! I told you that I was but trying your love,—but testing your faith in mine."

"It was a cruel test," murmured the young squaw, almost inaudibly. "It was like the black snake of the swamp when it threatens the little ones in the nest, with fiery crest and forked tongue, that it may lure the mother within the power of its deadly charm."

"Well, I am sorry that I did so. But we will forget it, and I will never do so again. But come, let us be lovers," and he held out his arms toward her.

"The pale warrior knows not the heart of the child of the red man," she replied sadly, as she again took her place by his side.

"It was cruel, cowardly, in me to so wound your feelings, beauty," and he strove by words and caresses to banish it from her memory; but it was long before smiles chased away the shadows of sorrow and her heart ceased to heave tumultuously. The finger may be lifted from the harp-string it has rudely struck, but it will vibrate still.

Ah, fleet-footed deer of the wilderness, and confiding daughter of the red man, the quiver of the hunter's sheath is bristling with sharp-headed arrows, his bow is strong, the string tough, the aim certain, and his target hearts! Well, perchance, for both, that the moon that rose upon your birth had set upon your grave.

"Come, Cedar Bud, cheer up!" continued the young lieutenant. "I must soon leave you. Let the little time we have left to be together, be like the prairies, all roses."

"Oh, that we could rob them of the thorns!"

"It would be a dangerous undertaking. But we will not think of them now. Life for young hearts like ours should be but a wreath of flowers: the days, the full-blown ones; and the hours, the little buds that slip away from the perfumed chain almost unnoticed."

For true hearts and true loves, yes, George Harding, but not for those who have concealed a serpent among the blushing cups

and shining leaves, that only bides its time to sting and poison to the very depth. Ah, that its slimy trail should be festering on all that is purest and best and holiest! That its scaly folds should be twined around all of earth, loathsome and deadly!

"Will the pale-face take Cedar Bud to his war wigwam?" asked the Indian girl as she at length roused herself from her rosy-tinted dreams of coming happiness.

"To my home—to the fort? Yes—yes, I understand—let me see?" The direct question, so unexpectedly put, staggered him. "Let me see? It is now"—

"The moon of the fading leaf."

"October? Yes, so it is, and"—

"Then comes the moon of the falling leaf, and after that the desolate, icy one of snow-shoes, and the long winter. Cedar Bud will be cold in the open lodges of the Mandans when the wind sweeps from the Northland, and the thick blanket of frost has hidden the fish in the streams."

"That would never do, beauty,—never do. My wife"—

"Wife!" and the girl seized his hand and pressed it in rapture to her lips.

He had unintentionally committed himself, and not daring to retreat (leaving to time the chance of finding some means of escape), continued,—

"Wife? of course; and"—

"He will take Cedar Bud as he would a snowy-skinned maiden of his own tribe? He will call upon the soul-medicine of the Great Manitou, the priest, as he calls him, to bind them fast until the dark-winged angel of death shall call one or both to the spirit-land?"

"Certainly. How else could you be mine?"

"The daughters of the pale-face may be fairer than the children of the wildwood,—their skin may be more like the first pure snow the spirit of winter scatters, as the blossoms of the dogwood, over the earth; but their hearts are not more true than that of the daughter of Black Smoke."

"I know it, Cedar Bud, and"—

"As the compass-plant of the prairie points ever toward one spot, as the star of the evening shines ever upon the wigwams of the Mandans, so will the heart of their child point and shine only for the pale warrior."

"I believe it. I believe you will be true."

"And she shall rest in his wigwam, dress his venison, and embroider his mocasons; wait upon him when he comes back tired from the hunting trail, and tend him when sick or wounded on the war path?"

"Yes—yes."

"How many times must the sun rise and set before"—

"She shall be my wife? Is that what you would ask?"

"Wife? Yes! oh, yes!" and again her features were transfigured by the certainty of a requited love into almost peerless beauty.

"How soon? In three days' time. In the evening of the third day I will meet you here."

"And take me to your war wigwam?"

"Perhaps. But you shall be my wife," and he paid back her passionate kisses, and soon after departed, carrying with him the fawn that had fallen dead at the feet of the girl.

"The great Manitou has blessed the heart of Cedar Bud," murmured the Indian girl, as she, also, turned upon the homeward trail. "She will be the wife of the paleface warrior."

"Yes, by Heaven, she shall!" murmured Ned Greenwood, who, having followed the deer he had wounded, had come unexpectedly upon the lovers, and, concealed in the thick undergrowth, heard their conversation. "Yes, she shall be, at least, his lawful wife; though, God help and pity her! she will be deserted and heart-broken all the same," and he ran hastily toward the fort, that his absence might not be suspected by Harding.

"Well, lieutenant," was the salutation of the commandant, as he saw the young officer arrive, bearing the game upon his shoulder, "you have redeemed your promise, I see."

"A good shot, was it not, sir?" and he pointed to the mark of the bullet. "But I am very tired," and he disappeared in his quarters to plot a successful conclusion for his dastardly work of ruin and crime.

"That was a good shot, Ned," continued the old man, all his thoughts being centered upon the game, and the rare feast it would furnish him.

"Yes, sir," replied Greenwood evasively; "more than one light-hearted fawn has this day received its death-wound in the forest."

And he turned away before he could be questioned.

CHAPTER III.

Three days passed quickly, and yet how much of human happiness or misery can be condensed into them! How many a new pulse is awakened to life, and how many a soul stranded on the thither shore of time! Three days! Ah, how well it is that we cannot know what they will bring forth!

George Harding had finished his plans. He had found one in that little garrison as base as himself. One who, for a few shining dollars, pledged himself to enact the part of a minister of God, and prostitute the ordinance of marriage to an infamous use.

Is it true, think you, that there is an invisible bell swung between heaven and earth that is rung loudly when an unpardonable sin is committed, though heard by no ears save the guilty ones? If not a fable, how its peal must have shook the very souls of these men when that compact, worthy only of hell and fallen spirits, was entered into.

"Are you here?" whispered the lieutenant as he reached the timber, after having cautiously passed the sentinel at the gate of the fort, whom he had also bribed.

"Here!" was the gruff reply of a man who stood in the deep shadows.

"And what are you here for?"

"To catch the doe while the buck is sleeping."

This being the password agreed upon, Harding at once took the path that led to the place of rendezvous, followed by his companion. The way was neither long nor difficult, and soon they saw the Indian girl stand alone upon the margin of the little river. How implicitly she trusted him, this action revealed. Without a single witness of her own nation, — without father, mother, sister, or friend, — to give herself up to one who belonged to the conquerors of her race!

"Cedar Bud," he whispered as he took his place by her side, "see, I have brought a minister to make us man and wife."

"Is he, then, a soul-medicine of the great Manitou?" she asked, looking at the muffled form before her.

"Yes; he is a priest."

"The daughter of the red man kneels at

his feet for his blessing," and she prostrated herself before him.

"What insane murmuring is this?" whispered Harding fiercely, as he laid his hand on the minister.

"I must do the bidding of Him I serve," replied the other, in a disguised voice, and he finished the benediction.

"Pshaw! be done with this fooling. Marry us, and be quick about it. It will not do for you to be long absent from your post," and he took the hand of the Indian girl in his own and whispered words of perjured love.

And then and there, in the shadows of the grand old trees, with the starry eyes of night looking down upon them, — with the rustling of the leaves for a psalm, and the murmuring of the swift-rolling river for a deep-toned prayer, the vows were plighted, and the solemn ceremony performed that should bind them fast until death loosened the fetters. The pale-faced warrior had taken a dusky daughter of the wilderness for a bride, and she had given up name, tribe, and country for him.

The moons waxed and waned; the icy fingers of winter were taken from off the earth, and the smiles of spring were fast warming the myriad flowers into perfume and beauty. Still Harding fulfilled not his (at least implied) promise; still Cedar Bud, his wife, was not acknowledged or taken to his fort, but dwelt in her lonely wigwam among the Mandans, — lonely, for her mother had passed the dark river of death, and her father but rarely crossed its threshold. Vain had been her pleadings. They were stilled into submission to his wishes by fair though false promises, and his purposes glossed over by lies.

With the last days of summer a report came that the little garrison would be relieved from the frontier fort, and consequently all was anticipation and preparation. Soon the news was spread among all the Indians in the vicinity, for the hunters, bringing in game and peltries, were never blind to what was passing in the great war wigwam of the white men. True, it mattered little to them who were their masters; but the influx of strangers ever gave an impetus to their peculiar trade, and they were enabled to barter with far more advantage than with those to whom their trinkets and baskets had become hackneyed.

The braves painted and dressed in the

highest colors, and the maidens tricked themselves out in the most fantastic attire, to welcome the strangers. Cedar Bud alone sat in her wigwam, regardless of the tumult around her. She knew that the soldiers were to be exchanged, that her husband would go with them; and though a strange fear would at times creep into her heart, she crushed it down as unworthy of her love, stifled every suspicion, banished every doubt, and blindly trusted still.

"Cedar Bud," said Black Smoke, as he entered somewhat hastily, "what are you doing, child?"

"Nothing," and she hid the work she had been occupied with as if it had been some guilty thing.

"Why, then, are you not preparing to visit the fort with the tribe?"

"I am not well."

"Then the Medicine Man shall see you. You are all I have left. Your mother, 'The Sunny Sky,' is paddling her spirit canoe in the silver lakes of the happy hunting-grounds, and I am like a lone tree on the mountain top that with dead branches will soon fall. Ay, the topmost boughs are withered; the root will soon rot, and the strong trunk fall."

"Father!"

"If Cedar Bud is sick, the Medicine shall give the cooling fever draught, and charm back the spirit of health."

"No, not him! I cannot see him. I — I — will soon be well again."

"Then the black fingers of sickness have not been laid heavily on her heart?"

"Heart? No — no! My head" —

"Let Cedar Bud sleep. The good spirit of dreams will visit her, and when the moon hangs its silver crescent on the broad, black breast of night, she will be well again and go with the warriors and the young squaws to see the pale-face strangers. When all are gathered, the daughter of Black Smoke must not be absent."

The command contained in his words, softly as it had been expressed, she dared not disobey, and much as she longed to meet her husband-lover in the greenwood, — to learn from his lips that she was not to be deserted, — she dared not do so. Sadly, therefore, she made the necessary preparations; sadly wove bright flowers and feathers in her long, black hair; dressed herself in the garments becoming a chief's daughter, and banded the shining silver about

arms and ankles. When fully arrayed, she issued from her wigwam and took her place among the maidens of her tribe. Her coming was hailed with pleasure, for of late she had but seldom mingled with them. She had told the Medicine that she was studying the stars, — was fitting herself to carry the chips and feed the fire in the mystic lodge where warriors first received their credentials as "Braves," and over whose threshold so few of her sex had ever passed, whose secrets so few had ever learned. This he readily believed, and this story repeated by his lips made her wanderings and seclusion sacred. And yet, pure-hearted and innocent as she was, she felt guilty in thus taking her place among the unmarried ones, and she a wife.

Escaping from under her father's eye, however, as they passed along the shores of the stream where she and Harding had first met, — where the love words had been whispered and the marriage vows spoken, — she lingered behind her comrades and seated herself within the arms of a thick-leaved and wide-spreading tree. With her dark blue blanket drawn closely around her, and shrinking back into the shadow, it would have been difficult for any one to have discovered her hiding-place, even if searching. But wrapt as she was in intense thought, swayed and passion-tossed as was her heart, yet her forest training kept her acute hearing active and alive to every sound. Not the crackling of a branch, not a stealthy step of night-prowling beast, not a fluttering wing of owl or whip-poor-will, escaped her; and many as the noises of the wild-wood are, she easily recognized the sound of advancing footsteps. Not the moccasoned foot of the red man thus heavily presses the earth, and shrinking back still farther, she waited tremblingly their approach.

"Well, lieutenant," questioned one, as they reached the river-bank, and seated themselves upon a fallen tree, with the moonlight falling broadly upon them and revealing every feature, "well, what are you going to do with your Indian wife?"

The voice was a strange one to her, but the answer came from familiar lips, and thrilled the very chords of her soul.

"Wife!" replied George Harding, "wife! will you never be done with that foolish word? You know that we were not married any more than you and I are, — that the pretended ceremony was only to quiet

her scruples, and that you were the man who played the parson."

"But I did n't. The old man, from some whim of his own, changed the guard that night, and I was kept from wandering outside."

"I don't believe it. I saw you as I passed out."

"If you did, what I tell you is true."

"Who the devil then took your place, and"—

"Played minister? Why, I gave up my charge to Ned Greenwood, and"—

"It must have been him, then. But no matter; he dare not reveal my secret, and the marriage is all a sham just the same."

"And so you are going to leave the girl?"

"Certainly."

"But she loves you, lieutenant."

"What if she does? Would n't I cut a pretty figure on Broadway, or in Chestnut Street, with a squaw hanging on my arm?"

"But how are you going to get away?"

"Quietly, of course, for I hate scenes; and it would not do for the old man to find out that I had been acting the part of a Benedict."

"Nor the Indians, either. I would n't give a penny for your scalp if Black Smoke knew that you had played his daughter false."

"Never fear. I can manage the girl. I will palaver her like a priest. She will believe anything I tell her, and before she knows it I will be miles away."

"And she?"

"Oh, it won't break her heart. She will forget me and marry some red-skin."

"Well, it may be so, but I doubt it most mightily. If I am any judge of woman-kind, I should say that she would mourn herself to death."

"More likely that her love will change into scorn."

"Perhaps even revenge. Ay, lieutenant?"

"And if it should, I can have no cause for fear, far away as I shall be."

"Well, it is your own business; but, bad as I am, I am glad that I never put my foot into such a trap. Ugh! I should feel all the time as if an Indian had hold of my hair, and his scalping-knife was circling my head."

"Pshaw! These people have no more feeling than dogs."

"But dogs will sometimes bite."

"You are always croaking. Come, no chance of my seeing my Indian mistress to-night, and"—

"Besides, it is time we were back to the fort. Hark! do you not hear the drum?"

"Yes; and how gladly will I welcome its sound when we are marching from this wilderness!"

And they strolled leisurely back.

Very soon the sound of their voices was lost to the ear of the poor Indian woman, if indeed she heard anything after his avowal that she was not his wife, in fact, and that he was going to desert her,—going away to leave her to her fate. Wearily, heavily, she dragged herself homeward, and was found insensible at the very door of her wigwam by her father, on his return from the fort, disappointed, for a sudden change had been made, and the garrison would not be relieved for months to come.

And all the fall and winter that followed, George Harding saw nothing, heard nothing, except that she was sick, from his injured wife,—wife, in the sight of God and his holy angels, if not in the eyes of man. Perchance he was glad to be thus freed from her, for whom he now cared nothing; and when spring again scattered its sunshine and flowers over the earth, and orphans were received for an exchange, there was no heart in the garrison that beat more wildly or happily than his.

CHAPTER V.

The rustling of the banners and the rolling of the drums, the shrill notes of the bugle and the heavy tread of armed men, foretold the approach of the relief to the little garrison in Fort Clarke. Weary and travel-stained as the men were, yet their hearts were gladdened at the end of their tedious journey; and with all the "pomp and circumstance" of war they marched forward,—forward through the line of savages they were to keep in check,—forward until they shook their brother soldiers by the hand, and laid aside, for the time, both arms and discipline.

It was morning when they arrived, and on the following day the late occupants of the fort would take their departure. All therefore, determined that this night should be one of mirth. Many plans were broached, but none adopted, until Kate Buxton, the

black-eyed, brunette daughter of the new commandant, and who was fresh from a Southern boarding-school and gay society, suggested that "a ball, in costume, was the most delightful thing on earth."

To her wisdom and beauty none bowed more readily than George Harding; and cursing Cedar Bud from the very bottom of his soul, he vowed that if it were not for her, he would stay behind his comrades and woo this sparkling daughter of the land of the magnolia and orange. But stay he dare not! All that he could do was to strive to leave behind him an impression that might, should opportunity occur, enure to his benefit in the future. With this end constantly in view, he attached himself to the lady, and was a willing and active aide-de-camp in all her plans.

"Will it not be difficult," he asked, "to procure a sufficient number of dresses to avoid sameness? You know our means for procuring costumes is very limited. If we were only in a city, now, there would be no reason for failure."

"Oh," she replied, with a merry, ringing laugh, "we must improvise them. You do not remember, sir, that when a woman wills, she is certain to find some way of success."

"I know, fair lady, that your wits are sharper than ours. But except the ordinary dress of soldiers, the fort is barren of articles fit for such use."

"The Indians?"

"Yes, it would be easy for some of us to play savage, 'for one night only;' and I presume they will be fully represented. Even you might outshine them all as Pocahontas."

"I suppose you mean that I am already so dark that I would need little paint, sir?"

"Believe me, I did not. I was only thinking how such a dress as — as" —

He stopped abruptly.

"As whose, Lieutenant Harding?"

"I was thinking of an Indian girl I once saw."

"And fell in love with, of course. I have heard that men of your profession are as susceptible and gentle in love as brave in war. But you think the dress of this forest princess would become me?"

"Most certainly; and you it."

"What was her name? Come, don't tantalize me, for I long to know. It must be some poetical one?"

"The Indians have such fanciful ones that they are difficult to remember."

He was thinking of Cedar Bud, but his coward lips dared not breathe the name. Ah! how true as Holy Writ it is that "conscience doth make cowards of us all!"

"I fear you are but a fickle lover, Mr. Harding. But this girl's dress — can she not be found? I have set my heart upon having it. Ah! here comes one who will have a more tenacious memory," and she turned and met the old commandant.

"Well, Miss Katie," he asked, as he took hold of her proffered hands, "what can an old soldier do for you? Ah, bright eyes and rosy cheeks, if I were but a couple of score years younger!"

"Your lieutenant has been telling me about some Indian beauty who dresses strangely beautiful."

"Yes, I know. By Jupiter! but I don't think I ever heard her name. What was it, George? She sent you a wampum belt, you know, for saving her life; and" —

"It has escaped me, if I ever heard it, sir."

"Pshaw! that's just the way with you boys: so, Miss Katie, if you ever want a good husband, take an old fellow like me for" —

"For a grandfather?" she asked archly.

"There, there! go along."

"But I want to find out this Indian girl, and procure her dress to wear tonight."

"Get a squaw's dress? For my part, I'd as soon borrow one from a muskrat. But if you are determined, and Harding won't tell you, I think you will have to go without. No: I have it. Orderly, send Ned Greenwood here."

The brave young soldier entered, touching his cap both to his commanding officer and the young lady, and, assuming a military attitude, waited to be questioned.

"Ned," said the old man, greeting Greenwood heartily, for he had completely won his heart by his noble qualities and strict attention to duty, "Ned, what was the name of the young squaw that Harding received a love-token from? You know you saw it, and said it bore the totem of the Mandans."

"He should be far better able to tell it than I, sir, as they have met often since then."

"Met often? The devil they have! So, so, Master George, the deers you have been

hunting were very dear! No matter. Ned, the lieutenant chooses to be strangely oblivious; so tell us her name."

"It is Cedar Bud, sir. She is the only daughter of Black Smoke, one of the head chiefs."

"Cedar Bud? Oh, how beautiful!"

And the petted girl clapped her hands in delight.

"Yes; like all of them. But, Ned, can she be found?"

"Ask Lieutenant Harding."

"I know nothing of her, sir," replied the one thus addressed; "and it were better that you were attending to your duty, Private Greenwood, than standing here, babbling about what you know nothing of."

"When I need your advice, George Harding," said the old commandant, somewhat sternly, "I will ask it. Greenwood, can you find this Indian beauty?"

"I can try, sir."

"Spoken like a soldier. This young lady has been told by the lieutenant that Cedar Bud, as you call her, dressed in a remarkably picturesque manner."

"Far more so than any other in her tribe."

"Will you not find her, and beg, buy, or borrow, the dress for me to wear tonight? Oh, I will thank you so much!"

And Kate Buxton approached to the side of Greenwood.

"If possible, and I can obtain leave of absence, with the greatest pleasure."

"You will let him go, commandant, for my sake, won't you?"

"Yes, Miss Katie: yes. But don't ask me any more such favors, or the whole garrison will be running wild to serve you. Bless my heart! but such eyes would breed a mutiny in any camp."

"Then I can depend on having it?" she asked of the soldier.

"If within the bounds of possibility."

"Depend on it, Miss Katie? Of course you can. Ned Greenwood is as true as steel."

A blush rose to the face of the young girl as she saw the dark eyes of the soldier fixed upon her as he turned away, and in her mind a comparison was formed between the young officer and the private that was far from complimentary to the former. But he remained by her side as much as was possible during the day, and strove by every means in his power to do away with the

unfavorable impression which his conduct with regard to Cedar Bud had forced upon her.

Late in the afternoon, Greenwood returned from his mission, and presented the dress, wampum, feathers, and shining, silver bands, to Kate Buxton, with the simple remark that "Cedar Bud begged the pale-face to keep it, as she would never need it more."

Vain was all the questioning that such a strange message produced. To the fair girl, as well as Harding and the old commandant, he had but one answer.

"The soldier on secret-service, the spy in an enemy's country, must travel with a closed mouth," he would reply, half laughingly, and half in earnest, and then quickly excuse himself.

Whatever his secret was, he kept it faithfully: whatever he had seen or learned during his visit to the deserted wife, none could ascertain.

Tortured with thought, mad with curiosity, with the fires of hell burning in heart and brain, George Harding passed the hours that yet remained previous to the grand *bal masque* of the evening. As one stricken with pain he sat, until aroused by the stirring music, and the remembrance that he was engaged for the first set to Miss Buxton. In the simple dress of his rank, he entered the parade ground, that had been hastily prepared and decorated, and soon, in the excitement of the dance, forgot his late disquietude. In the giddy whirl, the stings of conscience were for a time lost, and the smiles that the strange words of Greenwood had driven from his face resumed their sway again. He was intoxicated, as it were, with the beauty of Kate Buxton,—with the sparkle of her eyes, with the grace of her every movement, and the melody of her voice,—and felt for her the deep passion he had only acted in his intercourse with the Indian girl.

Wearied with their exertion, the dancers at length paused, and began looking about for some other amusement. Naturally enough, in such a locality, their thoughts again turned to the red men, and it was proposed that a little band of warriors be invited within the fort to perform their cabalistic dances. This Harding opposed. He dwelt upon their treachery, hinted at sudden surprises, and did all in his power to turn their thoughts into another chan-

nel. But the willful beauty that was seated by his side laughed all his fears to scorn. She had never seen Indian dances, she said, and appealed to the commandant to know if there was any danger.

"Not the slightest, — not the slightest, Miss Katie. I don't know what has got into Harding, that he should talk thus."

"But there might be danger," still persisted the lieutenant.

"There are a great many things that 'might be' in this world, and yet are almost beyond the bounds of possibility. However, I am too old a soldier to go into battle without leaving a chance for retreat. Here, Greenwood, take a file of soldiers, ask the Indians in, see that they come without weapons, and be armed and ready to awe them into peace should they be disposed to be troublesome, or shoot them down like dogs if they even show their teeth."

A band of about twenty warriors, grotesquely dressed and painted, were ushered into the midst of the circle, and at once began their mystic ceremonies. The green-corn and the war dance were performed, and duly applauded, and while the preparations were being made for the final one, — the scalp-dance, — Kate Buxton inquired of Harding their names. With all but one he was familiar; and he turned to Greenwood, who was standing behind him, leaning on his musket, for information.

"I do not know, sir," was the reply. "It must be some young man who has recently earned his title of brave."

"Is that the reason why his face is painted black, while all the others are lined with gay colors?" asked the girl.

"No."

And Greenwood hesitated.

"Tell me it, then. You know I am to live among them for some time; and it is but fit that I should learn their customs."

"It is a sign that he is under a vow to kill an enemy, — perhaps more, — and until it is accomplished his face will be, as they say, 'under a cloud.'"

"Heaven help them, then! But see, lieutenant, they are beginning again."

And the girl gave all her attention to the dancers, who were whirling frantically around.

In a moment, however, they stopped, and appeared looking about for something; and the commandant asked what they waited for.

"Whiskey, most likely," sneered Harding.

It was brought, and all drank deeply except the one with the blackened face, who poured the contents of the cup out on the ground, and threw away the cake that had accompanied it.

"What sign is that?" again asked Kate Buxton of Greenwood.

"It means, lady, that neither food nor drink will pass his lips until his enemy is slain, and he can show the scalp in the wigwam of the tribe."

But, though their appetites were satisfied, the dance was not renewed, and Greenwood was directed to ask them what they waited for.

"A pale-faced prisoner," came hoarsely answered back.

"Who will go?" demanded the commandant.

"With your permission, I will," said Greenwood.

"No: I can't spare you. Lieutenant, let Miss Kate see how you would act if you were under Indian torture in reality."

"Not I, sir!"

And he shrank back as one in fear.

"Pshaw! One would think you were afraid."

"I am no coward, sir; but I will have neither lot nor part in this savage mummery."

"I will go," interrupted Kate Buxton.

And she arose as if to verify her words.

"No, Miss Kate, you shall not. Your nerves are not strong enough to sustain the ordeal. If I had hair enough to answer for a scalp-lock, I'd go myself, old as I am."

"See," — and she shook her long, waving hair about her shoulders, — "see, I have plenty."

"And too much like the fine threads of a spider's web for hard, savage fingers to play with."

"If Lieutenant Harding does not go, I will."

"Sooner than that, Lieutenant Harding will enact the part you wish," replied the young officer.

And, throwing aside his sword, he walked boldly into the circle, and leaned against the post.

More wildly than went on the dance; more fiercely their death-song was shouted; more furiously the drum was beat. One by one the war-painted braves advanced, and

with their knives (the only weapon Greenwood had allowed them to retain) threatened his life. Then they darted forth from the circle, and, grasping his hair, motioned to tear away his scalp. So truthfully was it enacted, so like reality, that Kate Buxton grew pale as ashes, and almost fainted. With trembling lips she begged that an end might be put to the scene.

"Yes, yes, in a moment," was the reply of the commandant. "See, Miss Kate: there is only one more. It is that fellow with a black face. By Jupiter! but he crawls along like a snake!"

All now was silent as the grave. As statues stood the red men, without the movement of a muscle, and with undrawn breath the white ones looked on. A whisper might have been heard from one side of the parade ground to the other as the young chief crawled forward. When within a foot of Harding, he paused for a moment, bared his knife, felt of the edge, and then raised himself to his utmost height, and looked intently into the face of the self-elected prisoner.

"Cedar Bud! Great God!" burst from the lips of the lieutenant.

"Husband!"

Swift as light itself, her long knife was buried in his breast, cleaving his heart in twain, and then circled his head, and his bloody scalp was waving in the air.

Another flashing of the keen-edged steel, and Cedar Bud fell upon the prostrate form of the white officer. She had fulfilled her fearful vow, and was both a murderer and self-murderer.

Struck into stony horror, even the soldiers, who had fought through many a

bloody field, stood powerless, stood as if but images carved out of senseless stone; and when at last the voice of the grim old commandant roused them to their duty, it was only to find that every grim warrior had escaped, and all that there was left to glut their vengeance upon was the pulseless form of the Indian wife.

"Let them alone," commanded the chaplain, as some of the soldiers were about to tear the corpses apart. "She was his wife: I married them."

"Wife!" demanded all, in a breath.

"Ay! and the mother of his child," interrupted Greenwood.

"His child!" was again repeated by every lip.

"Yes; his child that but yesterday closed its little eyes in death. Last night she was watching by its lonely grave: this night, if her belief is true, she is in the happy spirit-land. George Harding—peace be to his ashes!—would have deserted her, and left her to pine and die. Her savage love became the madness of revenge, and—you know the rest."

"And you knew of this?" fiercely demanded the commandant.

"As God is my judge, no! Had I had even a suspicion that Cedar Bud was playing the part of a brave, it would never have happened, even if my own life had been the penalty. I knew that her baby was dead: nothing more."

"I believe you: I believe you."

And, as the corpses were being lifted up, and carried away, to be prepared for burial, the old man drew his rough hand across his eyes, and wiped away the first tears that had gathered there in many a long year

CHRISTINE'S FLITTING.

BY FRANK LEIGH.

"What an idea! of course I shall not go!"

"Why not?"

"Go to a ball at the insane asylum? why, I should be scared to death! I should expect some raving madman to tear me limb from limb! Ugh! the bare idea makes me shiver!"

"That shows how little you know about such matters; the raving inmates are never allowed to attend these entertainments, and those who are permitted to be present behave themselves with perfect decorum and enjoy the dancing exceedingly; the music seems to exert a healthy, subduing influence upon them."

"Have you ever been to one?"

"Oh, yes, several; they are well worth attending. You will probably see some grotesque costumes and perhaps a few erratic steps in dancing, but beyond that there will be nothing to indicate that you are in a lunatic asylum. Aside from your own pleasure I am personally desirous that you should go. I am very anxious to get an interest in a mining company of which Mr. Rowe and Mr. Pearsall are president and secretary. These two gentlemen are principal trustees of the insane asylum, and invited us to go: their families are going, and they are desirous that there should be a few sane people there beside themselves.

You will go to oblige me, will you not, Christine?"

"Oh, yes, if you are really anxious about it, and if the Pearsall girls are going."

And Christine ran, light-hearted and happy, to prepare her costume for the evening, while her uncle and guardian, Charles Sanborn, wrote a brief note to Mr. Pearsall, accepting his invitation for Christine, but declining it for himself on plea of urgent business.

The ball at the Franklin Insane Asylum was a fine affair; Christine met a number of friends there, and anticipated a pleasant evening, the more so when Fred Coleman came up to claim a dance.

"Why, Fred! How came you here? Or are you one of the quiet patients?"

"I might, with propriety, answer your question Yankee-fashion, by asking how you came here, and if you are a patient? I came as escort to Lou and Mollie Rowe, my cousins; you know their father is one of the trustees. Where is your Uncle Charles?"

"He could n't stay; he brought me and then went to some business meeting or another; I never saw such a man,—business, business, is all he thinks of; he put me in the care of Mrs. Snowden,—the matron, you know,—and is coming for me by and by."

"Then I suppose I may be allowed to

have a dance or two with you, — that is, if you are willing."

"Make hay while the sun shines? I wish I knew why it is that Uncle Charles dislikes you so; did you ever do him an injury?"

"I never knew until recently just why he persecutes me so. One reason is that twenty years ago my father endorsed a note for him, he assuring poor father that it was a mere form and that he would meet the note the instant it came due, and when it did fall due my father had to pay it at a great sacrifice; just at that time a mortgage which Mr. Browne had on our homestead fell into your uncle's hands and he foreclosed it; this was our pecuniary ruin, and your uncle was the cause of our poverty. I told him once — not knowing that I was speaking to the offender — that if I ever came across the fellow who had served my father so shabby a trick I would ruin him if it lay in my power to do so. I think he is a little afraid of me, — maybe conscience-stricken."

Fred told the truth so far as he went; he omitted, however, to tell Christine that her uncle knew of his love for her and had forbidden him to cross his threshold or make any advances to Christine.

"Remember," he had said savagely, "she and her money are completely and entirely in my charge until she is twenty-five; if she marries against my will before she reaches that age she will be a dowerless bride and I will be gainer. She has been reared in affluence, has expensive tastes, and is accustomed to gratify them, and knows nothing about work of any kind: if you are sincere and unselfish in your love for her you will think twice before you will drag her down to penury. Young people are apt to think they can live on bread and cheese and kisses, but I notice they change their tune after a year or two of it."

So Fred held his tongue and hoped: he did more, he pored night and day over his medical books, practiced gratis anywhere and everywhere for the sake of experience, and though now only six-and-twenty he had some little reputation in Franklin as a rising young physician.

As Fred had been Christine's devoted slave in her baby days, her playmate and errand boy, and finally her boy lover in her school-days, and had never then nor since paid any attention to even the prettiest of the other Franklin girls, Christine had not

reached her twenty-second year without making up her mind that fate had destined her to be Mrs. Coleman or to die Miss Sanborn. Her uncle was much mistaken when he said she could do nothing; unknown to him she understood cooking to a certain extent, was a wonderful cake-maker, and could wield her needle as skillfully as many a professed seamstress.

During a pause in the dances Christine sat down in a retired part of the room to look at some photographs; she had not observed that the window just behind her was a little way open, but presently her attention was drawn to it by hearing voices, and she was about to move, fearing the draft, when her own name caught her ear; the sentence was so dreadful that she remained motionless, to lose nothing of the ensuing remarks.

"What a pity that little Christine Sanborn has gone crazy! How it must worry her uncle: was there ever any insanity in the family?"

"Yes, on her mother's side; it seems she has an aunt now in an asylum somewhere, and her grandmother died raving crazy."

"Christine knew well that her mother was an only daughter, and as she was with her grandmother during her last illness she was certain the old lady died as she had lived, in full possession of her faculties; so, astonished and alarmed at what she had heard, she continued listening.

"How long has the poor girl's mind been wrong?"

"Oh, for months; her uncle paid a woman enormous wages to watch her, pretending to be the housekeeper, and they say that lately she has grown violent, threatening to kill every one, especially her uncle, and they are afraid to keep her at home any longer."

"Dear me! I expect there will be an awful scene when Kate attempts to take her up-stairs."

Like a flash of lightning Christine remembered how she had disliked the new housekeeper and had been vaguely suspicious of her; how her uncle and this woman had seemed to have some secret understanding, or at least some interesting topic of conversation of which they desired her to know nothing.

For the next half-hour she closely observed the words and deeds of those around her, and became convinced that she was un-

der the same surveillance as the inmates of the institution; then seeing the matron and the resident physician standing together, she went up to them and said to the former in as careless a tone as she could assume.

"O Mrs. Snowden, I am so tired! I have danced my feet almost off! What time did Uncle Charles say he was coming to take me home?"

Christine intercepted an uneasy glance at the doctor, who looked annoyed, as the matron replied, —

"Your uncle thought you would want to see the ball out, so he said he would not come before two o'clock, — perhaps not so soon if he chanced to over-sleep himself; you are not ready to go yet? if you are very tired" —

"Oh, no, indeed! I am not so tired as all that; I shall be rested in a minute. Then as it is not quite midnight I have at least two hours more, have n't I?"

And Christine was sure that the matron looked very much relieved, and that the doctor was giving Mrs. Snowden a hint when he said, —

"If your uncle should be a little late and you should be completely tired out, perhaps Mrs. Snowden will let you lie down on her sofa and I will give you a little hot punch or toddy to refresh you."

"Oh, thanks," answered Christine, with apparent unconsciousness: "if I become very much fatigued I will whisper 'punch' in your ear."

An expressive smile was on the doctor's face as well as the matron's, and Christine, sick at heart, was sure that they did not intend her to leave the asylum for many a weary day. With a bright smile on her face and a chill down her spine she sought Fred Coleman and asked him to come and look over some engravings with her; Fred was not a little surprised, but followed her across the hall to the library and drew chairs to the table whereon lay the engravings. Only a few persons were in the room; so under cover of describing a picture she said, —

"Fred, I have something dreadful to tell you; but steady your countenance, don't let any one think we are talking anything but nonsense. Here, read this description aloud while I whisper to you."

So, while Fred obediently read a long description of St. Peter's, Christine told him of the infamous plot she had just discov-

ered; he was at first incredulous, but as she was so thoroughly alarmed he determined to do something desperate to rescue her, what, he did not know, until Christine herself solved the difficulty by saying, —

"Fred, your sister Anna and Mr. Pelham are at home now, are they not?"

"Yes."

"Well, take me there; I know Anna will protect me, she was always fond of me."

"You say they are watching you: how can you get out of this place?"

"I noticed a little while ago that the window in the room we used as a dressing-room leads out on a little porch only a few feet from the ground; I will go to the dressing-room on some errand and pick up your cousin Lou's hood and shawl, — she won't mind, — and go out on that porch, and if no one sees me I will jump down and join you by the fountain."

Fred had no time to dispute her plan, although he feared it would not succeed, as just at that moment several persons entered the room, among them Mrs. Rowe; Christine took Fred's arm and led him to the foot of the stairs, saying aloud for the benefit of bystanders, —

"Your aunt, Mrs. Rowe, wants her shawl; I am going up for it and will be down in a few minutes; go and secure our place in the Lancers, and I will get your aunt to bring me to you."

In spite of Christine's fears to the contrary, she was allowed to run up-stairs unmolested; no one was in the dressing-room, and it was the work of but few seconds to gather her dress all around her, throw on Lou's large dark shawl and scarlet nubia and step out on the little porch; she cautiously closed the solid wooden shutters behind her and then jumped down to the ground, the height proving even less than she had feared; hugging the shadowy wall carefully she reached the garden unseen, and in two seconds more was by Fred's side at the fountain.

"Come, let's run, I'm afraid they've missed me already," whispered Christine, as Fred drew her hand through his arm.

"I am mighty glad you got safe this far, I was in awful anxiety about you; but let us see if we can't get a conveyance, there are a lot of carriages waiting down by the gate, and I know my uncle ordered his to come early."

"Oh, no! don't call one, they might hear

na. I'd rather walk: it's only a few blocks. They have no right to take me" —

"Might makes right; but let us go down this street and go in Anna's back gate. If they are determined to have you, dear Christine, you must remember that we will have to give you up, — you are under your uncle's guardianship until you are twenty-five, you know" —

"But, Fred, can't I go to law about it? I am legally of age."

"Law will do you precious little good if you have no money, — and you know not a cent is yours for nearly four years; moreover, they will not try to seize you openly in all probability; as long as you stay hidden with Anna you will be safe, but I know your uncle well enough to be sure that he will leave no stone unturned to get you again."

"You have always been my friend, Fred. Can't you think of some way to help me?"

Fred was silent a moment, then said, —

"Yes, I know of one way, but I fear the remedy will be worse than the disease."

"Nothing can be worse than that asylum; what is it?"

"Suppose we don't make any plans until we have seen my brother-in-law; he is long-headed, and I dare say can suggest something."

"No: I don't want to wait: I'd rather settle it now. Besides, you must hurry back to the ball to escort your aunt home, or they will suspect that you have taken me away. What is your dreadful remedy?"

Fred hesitated still longer, but Christine persisted in having an answer, so he said, —

"If you were a married woman you would be safe, — but then you know you lose all your money" —

"Oh, bother the money!" was Christine's forcible if not elegant rejoinder. "I would not let that stand in my way if there was any one who wanted to marry me under such conditions."

"Maybe I am awfully selfish to suggest such a thing, but I love you dearly, Christine, and would rather have you penniless than the richest woman that ever lived, so if you are willing to accept me under such circumstances I am yours."

Christine was a little embarrassed at so singular a proposal, so, nervously laughing, replied, —

"Well, Fred, you certainly are better than the insane asylum; but we can't be

married at once, and meantime I am not safe."

"Yes, you are; we have got in Anna's garden without detection. I have my pass-key, and need not let any of the servants see us." And unlocking the door he told Christine to sit in the parlor a few moments while he aroused his sister.

Mr. and Mrs. Pelham were not a little astonished when Fred roused them to relate the news. Mrs. Pelham hastily dressed herself and ran down to the frightened girl.

"My darling child! What an awful thing! I am so glad Fred brought you here, your uncle may tear me in pieces before I'll give you up," was Mrs. Pelham's greeting to Christine.

"Well, Anna, I must hurry back, I've got to take Aunt Louisa and the girls home; hide Christine until morning, and then she will be safe, as I am to marry her. Good-night. If there is anything to tell I will wake you up when I return." And with these words Fred hurried away.

As you may imagine, neither Christine nor Mrs. Pelham retired until Fred came home, so anxious were they to know whether the fugitive had been traced. The young man's report was encouraging. When he re-entered the ball-room his aunt seemed to be the only person who had missed him, for as Mr. Sanborn had not thought of the probability of Fred's being at the ball he had not mentioned him to either Mrs. Snowden or the resident physician, and these being comparative new comers in Franklin knew nothing of the long friendship between the young people and did not connect Fred with Christine's disappearance.

As Christine afterward learned, she was missed very soon after her flight; messengers were sent at once to Mr. Sanborn's, supposing her to be there, so that considerable time was wasted before it was ascertained that she had really run away.

After Fred had related what little he knew about the above he turned to Christine and said, —

"Christine, dear, you have had a little time to think over the matter, and if you want to change your mind about marrying me, — you know I am poor" —

"Of course, Fred, I don't want to force myself upon you: I know a wife is a burden" —

"Oh, what geese you two are!" inter-

posed Anna. "Christine, Fred has worshipped you ever since you were born, and you know you love him, so what is the use of being so foolish? as soon as it is daylight you can go and get the license, Fred, and ask Mr. Bayly to come here and we will have a quiet wedding in spite of Mr. Sanborn. But it is late and you are tired and we must go to bed; come, Christine, you can sleep with Lottie."

And as they went up-stairs Fred contrived to whisper to Christine, —

"For my part I think I am vastly indebted to your uncle; tomorrow will make me as happy as a king if only you are content."

Christine's answer was to lay her hand in Fred's, and say, —

"I think Uncle Charles has behaved

splendidly; let's go and see him tomorrow and tell him so."

Mr. Sanborn rang Mr. Pelham's bell a few minutes afterward. A half-awake servant said, in answer to his queries, that Miss Sanborn was not there, and, being sent up-stairs to obtain more certain news, came back saying that Mr. Pelham said he had n't seen the young lady for some days. And so Mr. Sanborn went away. His wrath was hot when he received a note the next morning from Christine Coleman; but he had the money, and that was really all he wanted. Christine wanted to go to law about it; but Fred objected, and that ended it; for there never was a more loving, trusting wife than she, and her Fred's opinion was sure to be acceptable in her eyes.



CINDERELLA IN A STRAWBERRY-FIELD.

BY LOUISE DUPEE.

The new minister was expected to tea; and Mrs. Averill, hospitable soul, was anxious to give him strawberries and cream. Indeed, what was fit to set before a minister as an accompaniment to hot biscuit and sponge cake but strawberries and cream, especially in June weather? But strawberries were not ripe in the garden. Deacon Willard, who usually had them for sale, was having bad luck with his vines, though they were all of prize varieties, and raised only sufficient berries for his own table.

"If we could only find some wild ones," she remarked to her daughter Hitty. "They used to be dreadful thick down in old Squire Lincoln's back field. I wonder if you could n't find some there, now."

"I suppose that there are strawberries there," replied Hitty. "but no one is allowed to go into the field now. The grass is quite spoiled every year by strawberry pickers, the overseer says."

"O dear! I wish pa had n't invited the minister till the berries were ripe in the garden. He'll think we a'n't anybody if

we don't give him anything but preserves. Mis' Parkes had both wild and cultivated when he was at her house, beside honey and some West-Ingy preserves that Tom brought home. But then he's been and invited him for tomorrow, 'n' he's got to come, though I'd almost be willing to have a spell of rheumatism if that could be an excuse to put off his coming."

Hitty, greatly to her mother's wrath and amazement, made light of the subject, and laughed merrily. "But, mother, if you feel so badly about it," she said at length, "I will go over to the squire's back field this afternoon, and if I am not discovered will promise you enough berries for tea. The grass will be on my conscience, but I will be as careful of it as I can."

"Oh, you would n't trample it down as the boys do," said her mother, brightening wonderfully. "Do put on your hat and go right off, for I sha' n't have a moment's peace till I am sure of the berries."

Hitty accordingly set off as soon as possible. But she first made a tour to the attic

in search of an old cape bonnet which she used to wear in her little-girlhood, thinking it might be something of a disguise, as it was shaped like a flour scoop coming very far over the face; and she did not care to be recognized if the overseer of the Lincoln lands should happen to be on the watch for strawberry-pickers.

It was the last day of June, and the world was a paradise of leaves and blossoms, brook and bird songs. It was a long time since Hitty had been strawberrying before, and she felt like a little girl again as she went on her way across the fields, over stiles, through little bits of purple woodland, and by the side of little bubbling brooks. Her light feet clipped off the heads of the daisies, making a pleasant, well-remembered music. She found a bird's nest cozily hidden away in the ground, in the midst of a tuft of buttercups, and now and then some rare little blossom lifting its blushing face like the sweetest surprise.

Since Tom Lincoln went away Hitty had not cared to explore these old haunts. There had only been a boy and girl love between them, since she was scarcely more than fourteen and he hardly nineteen when they separated; but it was impossible for her to forget him. He had been in her mind all this five long years. Two of these years she had spent at a city boarding-school, and, oh! how she studied, what an effort she made to do wonderful things in music, and to improve herself in every way, that she might feel herself to be more nearly Tom's equal, and surprise him with her many graces and accomplishments when he should come home once more. He was in a German university then, and was, as all his townfolk believed, a remarkable young man. Indeed, they felt quite proud that he had condescended to be born among them; especially after an uncle in England died, leaving him an estate which amounted to one hundred thousand dollars. This, in addition to his father's wealth, seemed a really fabulous amount to Grassland people. It was very foolish in her to think of him at all. Kitty realized this perfectly, and still, when the village lawyer proposed to her, the mere memory of the old days when they went gypsying together caused her to say no so decidedly that he never dared to ask her again. It was in vain that her mother remonstrated, and her father reasoned with her on the subject. He was the great man

of the place now the Lincolns were absent. She could not marry him, though she respected him highly and knew him to be as good a man as any in existence, as well as a handsome, agreeable, and prosperous one.

"Any other girl in town would be delighted to marry him," her mother would say over and over again every day. "And if you're a clingin' to any o' that nonsensical talk of Tom Lincoln's when he was only a boy and you was in short dresses, you may as well forget it first as last. Mark Grant (the overseer) told pa only the other night that he was a cuttin' an awful dash in London now, never spoke of comin' home, and did n't have no interest in the old place at all. 'T a' n't likely that a man like him would ever think of marrying a little country girl like you."

"I have no thought of marrying Tom Lincoln, mother," Kitty would say meekly. And indeed Kitty had no such thought, but she could not care for any one else for all that. And when she found herself in the old paths where they used to go berrying together, a sense of sadness and regret came over her which the merry weather had not power to dispel.

The Lincoln back field was a long distance from the Lincoln mansion, and from any habitation whatever; and Kitty, reaching the stile which led into the forbidden grounds, stood for a moment gazing about her with apprehension. Then a huge dog, who had been lying in the grass, arose and rushed toward her, barking savagely.

"Tiger," said Hitty coaxingly, and his fury was immediately changed into delight, and he fawned upon her, wagging his tail joyously. It was a dog which had formerly belonged to her uncle, and he recognized her at once, as she had always petted him greatly. He was a reliable watch dog, however, and no strangers would have been allowed near the field while he kept watch there. Indeed, not one of the village boys would have dared to venture within twenty yards of the field while he was about.

Hitty crossed the stile, and, after a little search in the sunniest spots, succeeded in finding a perfect nest of great red, ripe berries hidden in the bush grass.

"Now mother's heart will be quite at rest," she thought; and, seating herself with due consideration for Tom Lincoln's grass, hung her basket on a twig and picked with great diligence.

It was nearly noon; butterflies floated about in the purple heat. The daisies began to droop in the sunshine. The blue-eyed grasses closed their veined lids. Hitty had nearly filled her basket, while Tiger, seated as closely by her side as possible, signified his pleasure in her companionship by an occasional wag of the tail or a friendly pat with his huge paw, though he was still faithful to his watch, and kept a good lookout for intruders.

Suddenly he sprang forward, barking joyously. There was a great deal of expression in Tiger's bark, and Hitty understood it. The overseer must be coming, she thought, and, hurriedly rising, she looked around her. But there was no one in sight. Still there was a sound of carriage wheels on the distant highway, and she concluded that this sound must have caused his excitement.

So Hitty very quietly commenced her task again, but had scarcely dropped a handful of the juicy fruit into her basket, when she heard voices most alarmingly near; and without stopping to glance backward, she pulled her bonnet over her face and made a hasty retreat.

"Here, you!" called a harsh voice. "Don't you know that you a'n't 'lowed in this 'ere field? Tige, what are you about? Gettin' lazy, or what? It must be somebody 't he knows pretty well," he began again after a little pause, or he 'd 'a' scattered her quick as lightnin'. You look out! if I ever catch you here again, I'll take the law of you."

"Oh, never mind," said another voice, a voice which was unmistakably that of a gentleman. "I would rather the grass should be spoiled than to treat a woman in this way. And she has certainly been considerate. She has scarcely left a trace of herself in the tallest grass. She seems to have filled her basket, or I would call her back."

Hitty's heart sank within her for fear of recognition; and in her haste to leave the field, she rushed into a treacherous bog which bordered the inclosure on one side, and at almost the first step lost her shoe, — a dainty, low-cut, ribbon-tied affair, quite unlike that of the ordinary berry-picker in Grassland. Hitty had the tiniest as well as the prettiest foot in the county, and she was extremely fastidious as to her shoes, and never on any occasion did she condescend to disfigure this pretty foot with the

thick boots from the village store which were worn by the other young ladies of Grassland.

"Who is this young woman?" inquired the young gentleman who accompanied the overseer, Mark Grant, and looked about the field with an air of proprietorship. "She knows how to run certainly."

"Don't know, she had her bunnet pulled over her face so; but if Hitty Averill weren't too stuck-up to go a berryin', I should say 't was her. She's jest so tall and slim. I never see her wear a pink bunnet, though."

"Hitty Averill? Ah," said the young man. "But she is n't Hitty Averill now, she is Mrs. Harris, is n't she? She used to be my little sweetheart. It seems only yesterday that we used to come berrying together in this very spot."

"No, she a'n't married. Lawyer Harris he courted 'n' courted her; but she would n't say yes, though they say he asked her as much as four times. Mis' Averill, she was dretfully in his favor, too, 'n' used to take on 'n' then scold about it. Her sister Mis' Page told me 't she prayed that the match might come about at last all the time, 'n' I thought of the old woman had got to prayin' about it, 't would surely amount to sunthin'. But Hitty's awful head-strong, they say; and nothin' would have any effect on her. Lawyer Harris is n't waitin' on any one yit, though, and p'r'aps he has some hopes still. They are beginnin' to think now, that the old woman, her mother, is a managin' to bring the new minister round to Harris's way o' thinkin', as far as Hitty is concerned, but I don't know how 't will go. I have heard it hinted, Mr. Tom, that Hitty remembers old times too well to think of marryin'. Of course she hez too much sense to think she could get the one that liked her then, now, though. Times has changed."

Tom Lincoln flushed to the tips of his ears; but he remained silent. To tell the truth, he had been thinking a good deal of Hitty Averill of late, — the little girl from whom he had parted almost in tears so few years ago. There were tears in her eyes, he remembered, such brave brown eyes as they were, and he had presented her with a gold locket with his picture in it, and she had given him a plain gold ring she pulled from her tiny finger. It was somewhere among his trinkets now, he did not know exactly

where. He remembered that he had promised to write to her, which promise he had kept for a short time, and that he never, never should forget her, never should care for any one else in the world.

Well, he had never really cared for any one else; though he had been through several rather serious flirtations, and had been greatly sought after by fashionable young ladies and their prudent mammas wherever he had been. But he had half forgotten Hitty, until he heard that she was going to be married to Mr. Harris. Then a great pang of jealousy seized him, and he thought for the while with deep regret of the bright, fresh little face which had so much of truth and innocence in its expression, and the gay, graceful ways of his little sweetheart of long ago. He had little faith in the women of fashion around him; but, as he remembered her, she seemed true to the heart's core, and he doubted if the world would ever have the power to spoil her.

"But she promised to wait until I came home, and she has n't kept her word," he thought bitterly.

Then it suddenly occurred to him, for the first time, that it was all his fault: he had ceased to write to her long ago, and she had, in reality, faded from his mind. Then, supposing her to be the wife of Will Harris, a boy who had snubbed him at the academy because he happened to be a little older and in greater favor with the teachers, he almost forgot her again. Indeed he had expected to leave Grassland, without seeing her, the next day. He had returned to his old home quite unexpectedly, and was going to take his departure immediately because of some business affair which claimed his attention in town. Perhaps he should return some day to see his old friends, perhaps not.

Absorbed in old recollections, Tom walked along with his eyes bent on the ground, when he suddenly stopped, and, bending down, pulled something from the thick, black mud beside the path. It was Hitty's shoe. Carefully wiping it on the grass, he held it up admiringly.

"'T was Hitty, I knowed it was, almost," said Mark Grant, "though she don't condescend to go a berryin' generally. There a'n't no such foot as that on any woman but her within miles o' this town. The city boarders 't staid at the farm last season

used to call her Cinderella after they got a glimpse of her foot in the street. I reckon she's kinder fond er showin' it."

"I should not wonder at all," said Tom, feeling a kind of exultation as he placed the precious thing in his pocket. "I shall call tomorrow, and restore the lost article to my old playmate," he added coolly, remembering the sharpness of Grassland eyes, and the power of Grassland gossip.

"Oh, I thought you was a goin' to leave in the morning," said Mark, whose look of unsuspecting innocence was very evidently feigned.

"I concluded to wait until we could decide about the Grafton lots," said Tom gravely; and calling the unfaithful Tiger, the two men left the field, and took the shortest cut home.

In the mean time, Hitty, quite out of breath, and with scarlet cheeks, had reached her mother's kitchen, where the anxious dame was waiting for her.

"Well, now, a'n't it splendid?" said she. "I ha'n't seen no such berries since they used to grow on the burnt land out by pa's wood lot, when I was first married. Thick, wa'n't they? But you do look dreadful warm and tired, child. You'd better lay down a spell before dinner. I was afraid you'd meet with something. Pa scart me almost to pieces, when he came in a tellin' me that Mark Grant had put an awful savage, great dog to watch in the field."

"And so he has," said Hitty. "But the savage dog is Uncle Sam's old Tiger. Of course he would n't molest me."

"So lucky! I know Mis' Parker's berries was n't anything compared to these, 'n' I shall have such a good supper," said her mother exultingly.

Hitty, for reasons of her own, chose to keep the appearance of Mark Grant and Tom Lincoln in the field to herself, as well as the loss of her shoe. And managing to walk so that her mother should not notice the condition of her feet, she hurried upstairs to her own room, where she remained resting and thinking for a long time.

At dinner-time her father came in panting with a most astonishing piece of news.

"Tom Lincoln is at home," said he, with the air of casting a thunderbolt.

"Sakes alive!" exclaimed Mrs. Averill. "I thought he was too fine for Grassland, and was n't never coming. I wonder if he'll call on Hitty. He and she used to be

dreadful intimate before he went away. When did he come?"

"Two days ago," he said, "but he has been very busy ever since, and has n't been out at all. He told me he was going to call over tomorrow, and I said we'd be happy to see him to tea. I knew you was expectin' the minister, and 't would n't put you out any."

"O father," said Hitty, coloring with vexation. "How could you do that? But then I know he won't come."

"Won't come? Why not? He seemed dreadful pleased about it, I'm sure, and said he should be here without fail."

"Mercy!" exclaimed her mother. "Well, I guess what's good enough for the minister is good enough for him. But who wants him here with his foreign, stuck-up ways! I heard that he kept a valet, some kind of a male waitin'-maid, to take care of him in London."

"A valet, mother," said poor Hitty, in distress. "I cannot imagine why father has such a mania for asking people to tea."

"Well, it can't be helped; and, after all, I am glad he did invite him. Mis' Parker would give her head to get him over to her house to tea."

Tomorrow afternoon came, and found Mrs. Averill in her best cap, her custards and everything to her mind, waiting for company. Only one thing troubled her, and that was Hitty's obstinacy in refusing to dress up. Usually, she liked to wear a white dress with pink ribbons, even on common occasions; but now she insisted on wearing a pink print with only a little white ruffle at the throat, and would not adorn her dark hair with a single clematis spray, though, when there was no company, it was always graced by them.

Hitty looked as stately as a duchess, however. No prouder little head was ever set upon the shoulders of a queen. And the pink print was worn with as much air as if it had been velvet. The clock struck five, and the minister was expected every moment; for, though a stranger, he was aware of the Grassland fashion of having early teas.

"There he is," exclaimed Mrs. Averill, as the gate latch clicked, and a quick step sounded on the gravel walk. "I knew that Mr. Higgins would have the sense to come early."

But Hitty knew that the step was not

that of Mr. Higgins, and opened the door with some trepidation.

A tall, handsome young man, with smiling eyes, grasped both her hands with the utmost cordiality; though, in spite of his foreign breeding, he seemed somewhat confused and awkward.

Hitty greeted him with her usual stately simplicity; and Mrs. Averill met him with her usual overflow of hospitality.

"I came early, Mrs. Averill, because I remembered your pleasant early teas of long ago, and hoped that you had not changed your hour," he said, smiling.

"No, indeed: I have n't changed the hour. I will have my supper at five when we're alone, and only manage to wait till six for company."

The pleased dame was rapidly changing her mind concerning Tom Lincoln.

"I was afraid you'd be too genteel to come till dark," she continued, "and here you are before the minister himself."

Hitty colored, and looked uneasily out of the window.

Tom's eyes were fixed upon her with undisguised admiration. But her manner chilled him, and he sat almost in silence when Mrs. Averill left the room to preside over her household affairs.

His unaffected good nature and evident pleasure in seeing her again soon won her over, however, and they were presently quite merrily chatting over old times.

"Hitty," he said at length, "the minister is coming. I perceive a clerical figure slowly descending the hill. Let us take a little turn in the garden, where we used to pelt each other with burdock-balls in the days of 'auld lang syne.'"

Hitty assented to this proposition; and the pair were soon cozily seated in the old arbor, deep in conversation.

"I have always loved you, Hitty," he was saying, "though I was hardly aware of the fact until yesterday. I supposed you married, you know; and ever since I heard you were going to marry Will Harris I have made an effort not to think of you. I was going away tomorrow, without seeing you, because I did not think it would be good for me to see you under such circumstances. But a happy chance took me into a certain strawberry-field yesterday, from which Cinderella in a pink bonnet was just hastening; and it was not until then that I learned she was free. I only caught a glimpse of her

retreating figure; but I picked up her slipper, and, placing it in my pocket, vowed that I would marry the princess it would fit. There can be only one such foot in the world. Here it is, Hitty; but I will not give it to you unless you will take me with it."

Hitty blushed and hesitated.

Just then her mother's voice called, —

"Hitty! Hitty! Why, Hitty! where are you?"

Hitty took the slipper from his hand, and arm in arm they walked slowly toward the house.

"Sakes alive!" exclaimed Mrs. Averill, — "right before the minister," as she related afterward, — when she presently saw them coming.

And at the tea-table, as she remarked, she sweetened Tom's tea "more than the minister's, and helped him first to strawberries and cream."

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE.

BY MISS CAMILLA WILLIAN.

CHAPTER I.

The great door of the N—— State-prison swung open, three men entered the guard-room, the door swung to with an iron clash, and Max Hunt was in State-prison for life.

"I'm glad we've got here at last," said one of the men, "for this fellow has given us pretty smart work."

"Tried to run away?" asked the night-watch, aside, of the other officer.

"Yes, sir. He has made three efforts on the way from Eastburn. He knocked Hill down once. You see we had to put on all the irons he could hold."

The convict was indeed heavily ironed. Strong hand-cuffs clasped his wrists together behind him, a light chain from ankle to ankle gave room for a short step, and another chain bound his arms close to his body. His face, a young face, was baggard, his eyes bloodshot, and his hair in disorder, but the wildness had given place to an expression of weariness and despair. The door had closed on him, and he seemed to feel that hope was shut out.

Two of the guard came in from their bed-rooms, for it was night, there was a rattling of keys, the prisoner was searched and dressed in the prison uniform, and then

they led him to his cell. They went through a low stone corridor with black, grated doors on each side, stopping at the last door. He had been quiet enough before, had scarcely seemed aware, indeed, where he was or what they were doing to him; but here he stopped short with a start, as though awaking from a deep sleep.

"I can't go in there!" he cried sharply.

"In with you!" said one of the men who came with him. "We've had trouble enough with you. If you don't go in quietly, we'll put you in a place you'll have to crawl into on your hands and knees."

"Can't I have a different place?" demanded the convict, turning to the night-watch.

"No, I'm afraid not," was the answer. "It will look better by day, for you have the sun in the afternoon. At any rate, you must go in now."

"Must!" repeated the convict through his teeth.

"Yes, must!" replied the other. "It is our duty to put you there. I don't want to make any trouble for you. You'd better go in."

The man shivered from head to foot, drew a breath that sounded like a groan, then bent his head and walked into the cell.

When they went away after locking him in, they heard deep, strong sobs through the grating.

"By George! he's broke," said Hill.

"Poor fellow!" said the night-watch to himself.

Max Hunt's was an aggravated case, and one that had caused considerable excitement in the State, the parties being members of one of its first families. Old Mr. Hunt was a superannuated lawyer, who had in his prime stood at the head of the profession in his own State. He was rich, and a miser. He lived in the house in which he was born, though it had become as superannuated as himself, and there he kept two servants, his agent and factotum Andrew Clark, and his only grandson and heir, Max Hunt. Clark had been with the old gentleman many years. Mr. Hunt took him in, in the flush of his business, as an errand-boy, also, that he might have somebody to swear at who would n't dare swear back. In one capacity or another the boy and man had remained with him ever since, and now he could not be spared. He collected his patron's rent, he kept his accounts, he understood his business as no one else did; he overlooked the household affairs, bought and sold, and saw that nothing was wasted in the kitchen when the master of the house became helpless with age and rheumatism. Moreover, he looked after and supervised Master Max, who called him housekeeper, and sometimes, in moments of hilarity, promised to buy him a mob-cap. Mr. Clark took these jeers very quietly. No one could perceive that he had any dislike for the boy. He seemed a mere calculating machine, impervious to everything but figures.

Poor Max lived but a dull life with these men, and it can scarcely be wondered at that he sought elsewhere for society and pleasures. Some boyish scrapes provoked storms at home, and as Max was not a patient fellow, it happened that as he grew toward manhood he did not grow in his grandfather's good graces. There might be other causes for their discordant intercourse, but he knew nothing of them. He tried to be silent about the small allowance he received, although it exposed him to a thousand mortifications. He commenced the study of law because his grandfather desired it, although he would much have preferred trade, and he took in silence many

annoyances from Clark, who held over him an espionage very revolting to the feelings of a high-spirited young man. At length, when Max was nearly twenty-five and his grandfather over seventy, a change came.

One night there was a cry through the house, a running hither and thither of frightened servants, and a gathering of neighbors. Old Mr. Hunt had been found in his study, bleeding and half insensible from a blow in the face, his desk broken open, and a large sum of money stolen from it. The story which the old man told was this: He had heard a sound in his study as he was about retiring, and remembering that a large sum of money which he had that evening received for rents was in the desk there he crept across the entry to look. By the faint ray of light that followed him from his room, he saw a man wrapped in a shawl bending over his open desk and fumbling among the papers. He sprang upon him, crying, "I have caught you!" and was received with a blow that for a time deprived him of consciousness. When he recovered he was surrounded by his servants and Mr. Clark. The robber had escaped, but a handkerchief marked "Max Hunt" lay on the floor, and Max's shawl was on the doorstep outside. Moreover, Mr. Clark testified with great apparent reluctance that on entering the house he had met Max going out hurriedly, had spoken to him, but received no answer. He then went to the study and found Mr. Hunt lying upon the floor insensible. It came out afterward as evidence that Max and his grandfather had been on bad terms for a day or two, and had had high words that very evening. Max had been heard to say that he would be a slave and a beggar no longer, and that if his grandfather did not accede to his wishes he must take the consequences. To be sure, it transpired also that their quarrel had been about Lute Ringgold, his engagement with whom Max then for the first time announced to the grandfather. Old Mr. Hunt hated the family, and refused to countenance the engagement, reminding Max of his dependence.

Link after link was added to the chain of evidence; and the old man, who, beginning by thinking that his grandson might be the criminal, ended by swearing that he was, and shuddered and clung to Clark when he confronted the young man in the courtroom. The crime was a dastardly one, the

accused was penniless, the accuser rich, and it ended by Max being sentenced to State-prison for life for robbing and intent to kill. *It mattered little that poor Lute, changed suddenly from a bashful girl to an impassioned woman, begged, and vowed, and prayed, and went on her knees to judge, governor, and council. The great machine of the law caught up her lover deliberately, but irresistibly, and ground him into a convict. She visited him in jail every day, to the great indignation of her family, who believed in his guilt, and when he was taken away, her last words were, "Keep up your courage, dear, and trust in God and in me. I will never rest till I have you out in the sunshine again."*

He begged her to write, but never come to see him. He could not bear that, he said. To see her in such a place would do him more harm than good.

It is useless to describe the grinding of those first days, or the sickness of hope deferred during that first year. Lute sent him letters full of love, but there was little encouragement in them, though she tried to speak hopefully. His grandfather was his enemy, and would never consent to his pardon but on one condition, — that he would immediately leave the country and never return.

This proposal Max rejected with indignation. He would never accept a pardon for a crime which he had never committed, he said; and he was as good a citizen as his grandfather, and would remain in his own country, thank you.

After waiting a year, despairing of help from outside, Max began to think of helping himself. He began by being very attentive to his work, very obedient to rules, and relaxed his usual cold silence, to assure his keepers that he had no doubt he should soon be freed. Lute had put a pathetic card in several newspapers, calling on the real criminal to do justice to this innocent sufferer, as she persisted in believing him. People smiled at this singular call, which had something sublime in its belief in the inherent good of the human heart in spite of crime, but they also wiped away a tear on reading it. The prison officers smiled also at Max's hopes and protestations. They were quite used to that sort of thing. All the convicts were innocent, and were going out directly. *But they were glad that he had become tractable.*

Suddenly, one evening at locking-up time, Max was missing. The alarm was given, and search made. It seemed impossible that he could have got outside the yard, and when he was not found in the shops, they set a watch privately in the yard for the night. Meanwhile, Max, who was in the carpenter's shop, had first, watching his chance when no one was looking, and when visitors were in, slipped into a pile of shavings, and crawled under the large work-bench. There he lay, holding his breath, and listening for the first word of alarm. There was none. By some strange chance he had not been missed. When the bell rung out, his heart stopped for an instant, but he soon found that it was the usual sign to stop work. The convicts washed their hands at the common sink, then formed in file, and marched around the shop till the second bell should sound. If the convicts whose places were next his in the file missed him, they said nothing. Max's nerves had not been strengthened by a year of confinement and silence, and he had difficulty in restraining a loud, convulsive laugh at the sight he saw from his hiding-place, — fifty pairs of legs to the knee, half black, half gray, trudging up and down, up and down, aimlessly. He would like to have reached out and caught one of them in passing. Presently they filed out, and he was alone. Then was his chance. There were five minutes before the alarm. He listened an instant, then crept out. The floors were firm, he could not lift a plank; there was a rough boarding inside the stone wall, but they were sure to look there. According to prison tradition more than one convict had been found hiding there. While he looked about in a fever of fear and desperation in search of a hiding-place, the great bell clanged out. His absence was discovered. Without a thought, Max caught the cover from the empty barrel stove, squeezed himself into it, and let the cover down over his head. The stove was not large — no one would dream that it could contain a man — but Max was small and lithe, and more than all, desperate. He crushed himself down, unmindful of torn clothes and flesh, and the suffocating, sooty air. He was scarcely in, before the shop door opened again, and the search began. The shavings were searched over, a dozen places which Max never thought of looked into, the walls and floor

examined, and one sprang on top of the stove, crowding the cover down so close as almost to break Max's neck, and looked sharply into a little wall-closet.

"Oh, he 's here somewhere," said one. "He can't get out. What a fool a man is to get himself into the dungeon for nothing." Max crouched, aching and bleeding, in his iron lair, listening to their talk, breathing the choking dust and ashes, more than once on the point of betraying himself by a cough. Was it an hour or a month before they went? He could not have told. A torpor had seized him and benumbed his heart and brain. Once he felt himself flare up hot and alive when some one hit the stove in passing, but he subsided again, and it was some minutes after they went before he roused himself to lift the cover a little, and get a breath of air. It seemed that night would never come. The convict cursed the long bars of sunlight that lay across the bench and the floor, and the rosy sunset clouds that looked in at the window, and he blessed with fervent blessing the first star that trembled out of the chaotic effulgence, drawing other worlds in its train as the skies deepened. Pitiful shadows crept stealthily toward him, and allowed him freer breathing, and a tender, mournful darkness, that, some way, brought to his mind that mother whose death he could scarcely remember, veiled him, and allowed him to creep from his torturing cage.

"O mother!" he sobbed, "where are you?"

The windows were a mere blotch of dim light as he got out, and everything was dark and quiet outside. He opened a sash so noiselessly as scarce to hear it himself, and slowly let himself down to the ground. At touching the earth his courage revived. He laughed to himself, he swung his cramped arms, he rejoiced in almost freedom, he tore up a handful of clover, the first he had touched for a year, kissed it and put it in his bosom. "This is a funny scrape for you to get into, Max Hunt," he said, almost believing that the whole affair was an escapade, and that he had chosen to come to prison just to carry out a joke.

He stole softly across the yard, treading the dewy grass with careful steps, avoiding the long streams of light that pointed at him from the prison windows. He saw the lower night-watch going his rounds, and laughed as he stopped a moment at the

door of his vacant cell. Max could see it all through the long outside windows. The clock struck eleven, and he crept on again toward a pile of lumber, after much labor shouldered a long plank, and made for the near wall. He caught his breath in exulting impatience as he fixed the plank against the wall, and prepared to climb. But first he turned and kissed his fingers toward the jail. "Good-night, old quarry," he said.

A sharp little click close by went through him like an arrow, and a voice drawled out, just at his elbow, "Oh, I 'm obliged to you: good-night. It is most bed-time, fact! Come, let 's go in," and in a lightning glance he saw one of the guard pointing a revolver at his head. His nerves seemed turned to steel, his blood to lava: he sprang up the plank. A kick, and he and the plank rolled over together, and, regaining his feet, a strap had been thrown around his arms, and the revolver now glittered within a foot of his breast.

"Come, Max, I don't want to shoot you, for the sake of that little girl you've got at home. Go back quietly, and try again. I don't blame you for wanting to get out, but, you see, it's my business to see that you don't."

The blackness of darkness descended on Max Hunt. For an instant he had a mind to rush on death, but the thought of Lute restrained him. A moment he stood still, and all the manhood and hope died out of his heart, then he walked slowly before the guard, a convict again, his eyes down, his head on his breast, his step heavy and monotonous. A low whistle brought the watch to the guard-room window. "Bring the keys of the dungeon," was all that the man said.

There was a row of dungeons that had belonged to the old prison, and in these it was usual to confine refractory convicts for a while. They were dark, oven-like places, of bare, unfinished stone, and were entered through small square iron doors near the ground. A convict who had done penance there for two or three days, with the dungeon allowance of bread and water once a day, usually considered his cell quite a fine room when he got back to it. Into one of these Max crawled, and in it he lay on the stone floor forty-eight hours.

This was his last trial for freedom for some time. He took to studying during his leisure hours. The warden furnished him

with law books to prosecute his studies, and he worked at intervals on reels for silk and thread which he carved out of soup-bones and sent to Lute. So another year and another passed by. Lute's letters kept him alive, and, notwithstanding the attempt to escape, and the severity with which life-sentence men were necessarily treated, he received many favors. People had begun to think that his sentence was too hard, and that he had n't meant to hurt the old man, and everybody knew that Mr. Hunt was a miser. Besides, every officer at the prison knew of those tender letters that came every week, and had seen the pictures of herself which Lute had had taken and sent twice every year, "so that he might see her grow old," she wrote, "and be able to recognize her when he came out." They marked how the face changed. The first was rosy and dimpled, with curls hanging in rich luxuriance about it, a sweet, happy face, with a promise of strength under its sweetness. The next was thinner, with shallower dimples, and shadows about the eyes. Each one was sadder than the last, and any one could see that the girl grew in the shadow of her lover's fate. It was evident that this poor Lute worked and watched, whether she hoped or not.

CHAPTER II.

Old Mr. Hunt sat in his study one morning, leaning out of his arm-chair toward the fire, although it was mid-June. Andrew Clark sat at a desk near by, sorting papers, his thin, yellow face bent over them, his keen, quick eyes running up columns of figures, glancing here and there. He was going to an adjoining town to transact some business for his patron, and had been taking his directions.

"It's three years today, Clark," said the old man, after a silence.

Clark started and looked up. "Sir?"

"Just three years since they took him to prison," he went on. "I've been thinking, Clark, that I was n't quite right about him. I was young once myself, and I ought to have given him more."

"It is a sad case, sir," sighed Clark, finding that he was expected to say something. "You had a narrow escape."

"But I struck first," said the other eagerly. "He only defended himself, and tried

to get away. Besides, Clark, I did n't see his face, and who knows what all those proofs are worth? Somebody might have wanted to lay it on him."

"Why, Mr. Hunt!" exclaimed his companion, astounded.

"I have n't said anything," he went on, "but lately I've had queer thoughts. I believe I'll ask the governor to pardon him, and take him home again. I'm a lonely old man, and he's all that is left of my flesh and blood."

"Very well, sir," said Clark firmly. "I am willing to leave. You know I wanted to three years ago. You can do as you please. I hope you won't repent."

"But I can't spare you!" cried his master.

"You can't imagine that I will stay in the house with him, at the risk of my life? It is out of the question. I think you ought not to risk yourself, sir."

"Oh, tut! I'm not afraid of the boy's hurting anybody. Why, he was as tender-hearted as a baby, always. He would n't have been so hard on me then, but, you see, I was too bad about Lute Ringgold. She's a good girl, Clark, and she could n't help it if her father cheated me. I've refused to see her, and sent her word that he sha'n't come out, but my heart aches when I see her pale face. Why, when I read that card of hers in the papers, I almost believed he did n't do it. Well, what's the matter?"

At the mention of Lute, Clark had changed countenance, first red, then pale.

"What is it, Clark?"

"Sir," said the other with difficulty, "I have been attached to Miss Ringgold, and she refused me before she accepted your grandson. It is not pleasant to me to hear her name mentioned in connection with his, for I respect her yet. For him, I would be glad if he were free and would leave the country, as was proposed some time ago; but he disdained that. If he will do it now, I shall do what I can, and would advise you to give him a sufficient allowance. But if he comes here to live, I will go. I wish you good-morning, sir. I shall return tomorrow if I can get through."

Mr. Clark did not return the next day. His business probably delayed him. The second morning came a telegram signed by himself saying that he was quite ill, was afraid of cholera, and in the afternoon

another signed by his physician saying that there was no hope of his recovery.

Mr. Hunt had never had much affection for this man, but he was used to him, and Clark had been a faithful steward. The sick man was only ten miles distant, but it was impossible to go to him. The old man walked to and fro in his rooms bemoaning his lonely and deserted condition, and longing for Max or some one to speak to. On the reception of the first telegram he had sent a messenger to take care of Clark and take charge of his business. He was now, as the evening drew on, expecting word from him. As he waited, his past life seemed to rise up before him, all its pleasures, its pains, its faults, its punishments. He remembered Max's father, a noble, high-spirited man, and the pale, timid little bride whom he had brought home. He remembered how this delicate flower had faded and died in that uncongenial air, and how her husband, his idolized son, had been unable to stay where he had lost so much, and had gone to die in a foreign land. He glanced up the life of their only child, and bitterly reproached himself for his selfishness toward the orphan.

"He shall come back!" exclaimed the old man. "He has been punished enough, and too much. He shall come home again, poor Max!"

Here the servant introduced his messenger.

I just came in the six-o'clock train, sir," said the young man. "Mr. Clark is alive, but the doctor thinks he won't last all night. Here are some papers, and a letter which they wished you to read right away. They had a lawyer and a minister in this afternoon, and Clark seemed to take on about dying. Will you read the letter, sir? I think it's something particular."

"You may lay it down and go," said Mr. Hunt.

The messenger, who was evidently excited and curious, withdrew in great disappointment. Mr. Hunt stood for a moment, pale and silent. The nearness of death to one whom he had known so long gave him some solemn thoughts. He walked slowly to the window, and, looking up the street, saw a familiar form coming down. It was a young lady of about twenty-three, a tall, slight girl with soft brown hair parted evenly over a pale, low forehead, and with solemn, tender, dark eyes looking straight

before her. The cheeks were pale, and the close-shut, patient mouth seemed to have forgotten smiles. Lute Ringgold was wont to turn her head away when passing that house, but now she heard her name pronounced, and looked to see who spoke.

"Won't you come in a moment?" he asked, quite humbly. "I would like to speak to you."

Lute flushed all over with surprise and fear. Oh! had anything happened to Max!

She followed Mr. Hunt to his study, sank into the chair he offered her, and waited as long as she could. But he was so long beginning that she cried out, —

"What is it, sir? Max?" —

"I was going to speak of Max, Miss Ringgold," he said. "The truth is, I want him back. We need n't talk about his innocence, we used to disagree about that, but perhaps you were right. I want all forgotten, and him to come back. He's all I have got!"

Mr. Hunt had purposed to be very quiet and self-possessed during this interview, but here he quite broke down. When he had wiped the first tears away he looked down on her where she knelt by him with her hands clasped over his knee, her eyes shining, her face all rosy.

"Say that he is innocent!" she prayed. "Say that my Max is innocent of that foul crime!"

"I don't believe that he meant to hurt me, child. Max never was violent, nor such a coward as to attack an old man. I provoked him."

"But, Mr. Hunt, Max swears that he must have left the house before the robber entered. He had been gone half an hour before the doctor was called. You could n't have been insensible all that time. Max says he left his shawl in his room, he had no occasion for a shawl such warm weather; and somebody got that and the handkerchief to condemn him. You must see that it was a plot. Then, where is the money? He had none when he was taken. Oh, say that he is innocent!"

"I hope that he is," he said tremulously. "I don't really believe him guilty." And with that she had to be content.

"If he comes out will you and he come and live here with me?" asked the old man, and he actually blushed as though asking for himself. And, indeed, he had a heavy stake in her answer.

"I think Max intends, when he is free, to go away as far as possible from here," she answered, a little coldly. "He has suffered so much here that he will wish to forget the place. At first he will be poor, but he will soon do something. Max has talent and energy."

"I have money. He should not want. All is his!" cried the grandfather eagerly.

"Max will never take a dollar from you till this accusation is proved false," she said firmly.

Indeed, money and many articles which he had lately sent his grandson had been sternly refused, and promptly returned.

"Then I am to be left to die alone!" broke from his lips in a desolate cry.

"You have Clark," she said. "You always preferred him to Max. Max was always subject to him. They could never agree. They cannot again live together."

"Clark did my business, and did it well," he said hastily. "But that was all. I never loved the poor fellow. Besides, he's dead."

"Dead!"

Then he told her of Clark's journey and illness.

"John has just come from there, and brought some papers. He said that the poor fellow was almost gone. I believe he said something about a letter. I'll ring and have lights."

"Let me wait on you," said Lute eagerly.

She drew the curtains, pushed his chair before the fire, throwing another stick among the coals, lighted a lamp, and brought him his papers, all with an ease, readiness, and quietness very pretty to see. Mr. Hunt could not remember the time he had been so well attended, though poor Clark had been very prompt and quiet.

"Now, my dear," he said, smiling, "since you have begun, please to finish. Your eyes are younger than mine. Won't you read the letter for me?"

Lute smiled, feeling a little at home in spite of herself. She opened the letter, sitting opposite him in the soft glow of the lamp, and read the signature or signatures first, for three names were signed after an unintelligible scrawl which she could not make out. The names were those of a clergyman, a doctor, and a lawyer, all whom she had heard of. She looked at him after reading them, and began to tremble.

"His will, I suppose, poor fellow," said Mr. Hunt. "Read it, Lute."

She looked at the first page, and a light flashed over her face. The letter crackled in her hand, she grasped it so. Then she dropped it, and threw up her arms with a great cry, laughing and weeping in one.

"What is the matter, child? What can it be?"

"O Max! my dear, wronged, slandered Max! At last you shall have justice."

"What has it to do with Max?" cried Mr. Hunt, in alarm. "Do speak! I thought it was from Clark, and that Clark was dying."

"Let him die!" she exclaimed. "My Max has suffered a living death for three years for this man's crime. He has risked his life more than once, he has suffered untold miseries, and despair. Oh, did n't I tell you, did n't I know, he was innocent? Mr. Hunt, it was Clark who robbed you and laid the crime to Max. It was Clark who struck you that blow. This is his confession. Oh, thank God! I am so happy!"

"We must send for him instantly," cried the old man, walking rapidly to and fro, wringing his shaking hands. "Call John! Send for a lawyer this instant. We will send a despatch to the warden."

His excitement quieted hers. Perhaps also she was better prepared for the shock. Her imagination had constantly dwelt on and called up visions of Max's innocence being proved, and she was now more delighted and exulting than astonished.

"The prison is closed before this time," she said, "and he wouldn't be told till morning. I want him to know it first. I will send Mr. Adams to you to see about the forms. There are always forms and little delays. But, O Mr. Hunt! may n't I go down and tell Max myself? There is another train that will go down tonight. Cousin Charlie will go with me, I know. Let me go down there and see him the first thing in the morning."

"You shall, dear child," he said, kissing her. "You deserve to be first to tell him. Go, Lute, and bring him home!"

CHAPTER III.

Although it was an express-train that went up to B—that night, there was one passenger for whom it went not near fast enough.

"Are n't we slow for an express-train,

Charlie?" she would ask, trying to speak quietly, trying to sit quiet.

"Chain-lightning would be slow for you, Lute," was the answer.

If it were slow in the cars, how much harder to sit half a night almost within sound of his voice, and not see him! She persuaded her cousin out from the hotel, though it was near midnight, and walked up to the prison, and round it, and looked longingly at the doors. But he would not allow her to ring, and she was obliged to go back to the hotel and wait.

"Now, Lute, be good, and I will come in for you when it is time," said Cousin Charlie in the morning. "We can't get in till the prison is open to visitors. I will watch and come after you directly."

"Don't tell, Charlie! Oh, don't tell! Let him be the first to know."

"Nonsense! Do you think I am going to blab? Just keep quiet. Have you got any papers?"

"Yes, a letter from the lawyer, signed also by Mr. Hunt, and a copy of the confession."

After what seemed to her an age he came back, and they started for the prison, Lute leaning heavily on his arm, her face pale as marble. They had not far to walk, and soon they came in sight of the wall. As they approached the yard gate which they had to pass to reach the visitors' entrance, the heavy bolts were slowly lifted by the guard on the wall overhead, the gate opened, and a man came out, pushing a light wagon toward them. The man had on a dark gray suit, and wore a black cloth cap, and his head was bowed forward in the effort of pushing.

"They make very nice carriages here," said her cousin. "There is one of their wagons."

The man with the wagon didn't seem to notice them, though they were directly in his path.

"Do you intend to run over this lady?" called out her cousin angrily.

The man looked up hastily, showing a pale, thin face, with glittering eyes, and closely shaven except for a mustache, which evidently was false. He started on seeing Charles, but dropped his wagon when he saw Charles's companion.

"Lute!" he cried, knowing that there was no need of concealment now, for she would not come there except to free him, she had promised.

"O Max! Max! You are free! It was Clark did it!" she exclaimed, too full of her news and her happiness to wonder how he came there.

The guard who had let him out, and who now looked after him with rather tardy suspicion, seeing this joyful meeting, and the party so evidently at ease and leisure, thought that all was right. He was a new watchman, and when he saw a man in citizen's dress wheeling a wagon down toward the gate, he supposed that it was his place to let him out. It was a bold and adroit attempt to escape, and would probably have succeeded had there been any need of escape. Max had managed to be alone long enough to put on the clothes prepared for the occasion, then had boldly turned a wagon and wheeled it toward the gate. Nobody had missed him when Lute took him to the guard-room, and with radiant face presented him to the astonished officials. Waving ordinary rules, the warden did not allow Max to go into his cell, but invited him to become his guest till he could be legally dismissed. Then Lute carried him off in triumph to his impatient grandfather.

At first Max thought that he could never live in his native town again, but the congratulations that poured in day after day from friends and strangers helped to wipe out the bitterness. His grandfather's sorrow and humility and weakness softened him; and, besides, could he ever refuse anything to Lute? She wanted him to stay, and he staid.

There was a grand wedding to please the old man, though they would have preferred it otherwise. Lute rustled up the church aisle in silks and laces, surrounded by a troop of lovely girls, and leaning on the arm of her uncle, who was her nearest relative, and who gave her away. Max stood at the altar waiting for her, and in his erect, proud form and flashing eye there was no sign of the convict, though his cheek was yet pallid, and his face closely shaven. The church was full, all eager for a glimpse of the bride, but the person most interested in them did not see at all, though he sat in the very front seat. Mr. Hunt sat and wept without ceasing all through the ceremony, and could scarce force a smile when Max came and presented his bride to him. When they both called him father, he broke out again.

They live there together, the old man sinking into his second childhood, but watched

over and attended with ceaseless vigilance and affection; Lute trying to realize her happiness, which she hasn't been able to do yet, and Max beginning to think that his hard discipline did him, perhaps, more good than

harm. After the first flush of anger, they heartily forgave the author of their misfortunes, and in all the land there is no happier household than that of him who was once Max the convict.

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